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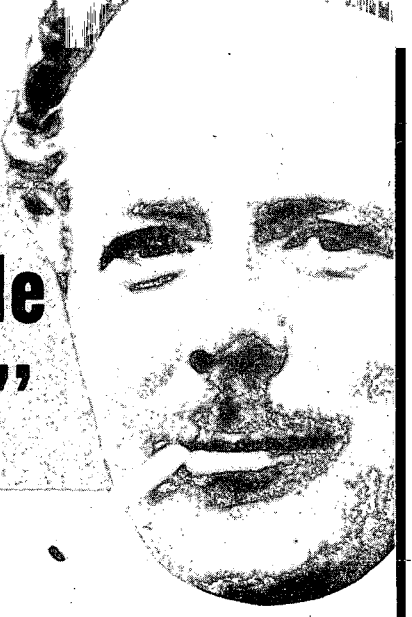

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CRIME STORIES

The Snows of Bardonechhia	*Gertrude Diamant*	3
The Murder in Netherby Gardens	*Lord Dunsany*	13
Murder Story	*H. L. Davis*	54
A Simple Act of Piety	*Achmed Abdullah*	81
The Tea Pusher	*Howard Schoenfeld*	109

DETECTIVE STORIES

The Haunted Policeman	*Dorothy L. Sayers*	17
Satan Had Another Name	*Charles B. Child*	43
Indian Sign	*William Cunningham*	95
Money on the Floor	*Bechhofer Roberts*	98
Who Killed Baker?	*Edmund Crispin and Geoffrey Bush*	138

ROGUES' GALLERY

A Job for the Macarone	*Damon Runyon*	34
Thubway Tham's Wonderful Day	*Johnston McCulley*	68
My First Interview with Artemus Ward	*Mark Twain*	78

MINUTE MYSTERY

The Case of the Faked Alibi	*Austin Ripley*	65

BOOK REVIEWS

Detective Directory	*Robert P. Mills*	66

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associate editor of the London Observer on detective story reading

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New York Times Book Review, February 18, 1951

BERTRAND RUSSELL

on detective story reading

"Anyone who hopes that in time it may be possible to abolish war should give serious thought to the problem of satisfying harmlessly the instincts that we inherit from long generations of savages. For my part I find a sufficient outlet in detective stories, where I alternatively identify myself with the murderer and the huntsman-detective . . ."*

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In which we emulate Oliver Twist and humbly ask for more . . .

The story of Gertrude Diamant's manuscript of "The Snows of Bardonechhia" is, in a sense, the story of a long voyage home. The tale was written somewhere in Europe, forwarded to America from Paris, and in a purely accidental way became an entry in EQMM's Seventh Annual Contest. But it was no accident whatever that Gertrude Diamant's story won a "Special Award" in our last year's contest. The moment we finished reading the manuscript we asked ourselves: Who is Gertrude Diamant? Why have we never heard the name before? For surely this is not the work of an unknown author; here is writing that is experienced, sensitive, polished . . .

So we decided to investigate, and research brought only a few facts to light. Miss Diamant once wrote a novel called LABYRINTH. *She had a short story in* THE AMERICAN CARAVAN, *that wonderful anthology of the late 1920s; she had another short story in* THE NEW AMERICAN CARAVAN. *And then we made a startling discovery. In 1942 Gertrude Diamant's* THE DAYS OF OFELIA *was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection!*

And since then? Virtually no record. Miss Diamant went to Europe, and has lived there in obscurity, apparently writing little or nothing. Why? How could such a talent be permitted to remain dormant, to lie fallow?

For there isn't the slightest doubt about it: Gertrude Diamant has an exceptional talent. We studied the reviews of her Book-of-the-Month Club novel, and here are some excerpts: "The New York Times" said that the writing in THE DAYS OF OFELIA *"has wit and beauty and sensitive skill." "The Atlantic Monthly" expressed the opinion that the events in Miss Diamant's book "are recreated with sympathetic insight." Dorothy Canfield found the book "brilliantly done . . . richly colored all through with humor and charm and deep-hearted humaneness." Clifton Fadiman, in "The New Yorker," also found the book full of "charm, humor, and humanity." Harry Hansen thought that Miss Diamant "commands a style that has the beauty and precise outlines of a fine jewel." And John Chamberlain, in "Books of the Times," described* THE DAYS OF OFELIA *as "a book that is created out of small flavorsome details."*

And now we bring you Gertrude Diamant's "The Snows of Bardonechhia" — perhaps her first writing in ten years. And even in this comparatively short tale you will find all the qualities which the critics found

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in her Book-of-the-Month Club novel of a decade ago: beauty, sensitive skill, sympathetic insight, humanity, a style with the brilliance of a perfectly cut jewel, and small deliciously flavorsome details . . .

We can only hope, now that Gertrude Diamant has begun to write again, that she will continue; that the winning of a prize in EQMM's annual contest and the appearance of her story in this issue will, even in a small way, act as a spur to her doing more of her fine, compassionate writing. For we would like to have more stories from Gertrude Diamant — indeed we would . . .

THE SNOWS OF BARDONECHHIA

by GERTRUDE DIAMANT

IT WAS NOW IN THE COLD DARK night, when Easter was over and the crowds were gone from the Piazza San Marco, that Venice collapsed suddenly, like a pricked bubble. All day she had walked around, ravished with the beauty of Venice, and thinking she could never leave it. But suddenly now it was all over; she was tired of the narrow streets, the canals and the bridges and the black gondolas, and the strange Oriental splendor of the Doge's palace, and she knew she must leave as quickly as possible. It was saddening to think how one's feelings changed, how the spell of a place could suddenly snap. But this was the common experience of travelers. It was that way in Rome, and in Naples and Florence. First, the terrible longing to be part of a place, to live in it forever. And then the moment when all this was gone, and the desire for trains and movement and newness took possession of her.

At the hotel she stopped at the desk to ask about trains. There was a dark young man with a very square beard (his face reminded her of one of the mosaics in the church of San Marco) leaning against the desk. She spoke to the clerk, but the bearded young man answered.

"There's a train to Milan at 7:45, a later one at 8:30. A train to Florence at 9:03, change at Bologna for Parma. For Turin change at Milan, for Genoa change at Turin —"

She stared at him, astonished.

"You can trust Mario;" the clerk said, "he knows all about the trains, he lives in them."

"But are you sure?"

"Oof . . . I ought to be sure. He's right, I live in the trains. I've got all the schedules here in my head."

"But you *can't* live in the trains — or perhaps you're a traveling salesman?"

Mario smiled. He took his pipe

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from his mouth and stroked his beard and smiled rather maliciously.

"I live *here*," he said, making a little square on the desk with his finger, "when I haven't got the price of a room, when a kind friend lets me sleep in the lobby. Otherwise, I take a train. Anywhere, to any place. You can sleep in the trains, too, and you wake up somewhere else. It's nice, isn't it? It's a wonderful life!"

She looked at him, thinking how gaunt and religious his face was, how much it resembled one of those apostolic mosaic faces in the church. But his eyes were not the same, not large and vague and mystical like the eyes of the apostles, but narrow and hard and filled with subtle watching.

"How about a coffee?" Mario said.

She had forgotten all about her room with the lovely Venetian-glass lamp near the bed, and the Venetian-lace curtains that she wanted to sketch before leaving. For now it was all Mario, and she was homeless with him in Venice. They walked — they walked endlessly through the narrow streets, and over bridges that arched the dark canals, and along the Via Schiavoni, where the sea slept against the city, like a large docile beast. They came to little squares — *campi*, as the Venetians called them — where old houses and churches with wreathed stone flowers drowsed in the night. They walked under dark, covered passages between the houses, where all was black silence, the silence of the black gondolas and the inky canals. They went to the Lido where she was astonished by the splendid boulevard, and the double row of lights, hanging in tri-form orange bulbs, like signs on a pawnshop. By now he had told her nearly everything: she knew that he had studied engineering, that he had learned English from the soldiers during the war, that he went around looking for work and not finding any, that he had once starved for six days in Rome, that he wrote his impressions of life every day in a notebook.

"And during the war —" she thought how far away it was, how long ago and forgotten and faraway was the time when she served coffee and doughnuts to the soldiers — "what did you do during the war?"

He did not answer at first. He stopped walking and drew away from her and began to make motions as if he were sweeping up waste matter.

"This," he said.

"Oh," she giggled. "You cleaned the barracks. Not very heroic."

"I swept up dead bodies," Mario said. "I swept up the parts — arms, legs, hands. I swept them up just like this, and threw them into the garbage."

His hands stopped their mimicry suddenly, and seized her. His face was close against hers; she could just see the narrow black anger in his eyes, she could feel the stiff brushy touch of his beard grinding on her skin while he kissed her.

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"Oh, please, please. Mario!"

He would not relent; his beard was armored with sharp teeth that tore at her lips. When he had finished he released her; he dropped her suddenly, but with a hard look of defiance, darting like a whip from his eyes.

"Now do you understand?" he asked. "Do you understand *anything*, now?"

She took his arm, still a little frightened of him.

"You were brutal, you were terribly brutal. I didn't expect —"

"No, you didn't. You think these are just things to talk about, lightly — the war, the way I starved in Rome. You just want to talk — it's all an evening's entertainment, isn't it!"

He turned her around roughly, and they walked toward the ferry. His thin arm lay passive and weightless in hers. He took his pipe from his pocket, noticed that it was empty, and put it back again.

"If you could take me with you," he said. "Take me with you, anywhere. Don't leave me, I beg you."

"No, but Mario . . . Look, there's the ferry. What happens if we miss it?"

"Plenty of time — those are only the lights from the boathouse. Tell me, do you think we could travel together? I'd carry your valises and save you the money for porters. I could even behave . . ."

"Oh, that!" she said lightly. "You mustn't feel too bad about it. In a way you were right. If one goes walking at night with strange Italians . . ."

"We could go first into the Alps. I know a place where I used to go skiing. It's so silent, so wonderfully silent in the mountains. Did you ever feel there isn't enough silence? That you want it more and more, deeper and deeper? Even here in Venice — I was born in Venice and I love it — it isn't silent enough for me. The sea isn't silent, it has a murmur if you listen closely. But think of the snow and ice on the mountains. Even the color is silent — white. Sometimes the ice has colors — many colors, too many, all the colors of the rainbow. I don't call that silence — the colors make you react, they make you feel. And I don't want ever to feel again. I want it all dead and silent inside of me, white dead silence."

"Oh . . ." she moved away from him, dropping his arm with unspeakable disappointment.

"You could probably never love anyone. It's death, Mario. It's horrible, dreadful. How can you stand yourself that way?"

"And you?" he asked politely.

"Oh, I still want to react. Things go dead on me, places . . . like Venice. I react violently to a place at first, and then it's suddenly all over. In Rome I was thrilled with those yellow buildings, and the ruins and the light. Then Florence! I went absolutely mad over the Palazzo Vecchio. Then Venice . . . I thought I could never leave Venice; it was just ecstasy at first. The Piazza San Marco and that

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weird campanile. I didn't really intend to leave Venice for weeks. But then it all suddenly snaps, and I've got to go elsewhere, and then it all begins again. But I never, never go dead. I just won't let myself."

"Yes," he said slowly, "I see. And you think we can choose all this? You think we can choose to be alive or dead, as we wish? Tell me what you think. You said you went to the high patriarchal mass at San Marco. Did you feel anything? Did you really believe in resurrection?"

"Not really," she said, "not literally. You can't look at it that way. I don't believe in the bodily resurrection. All those dead bodies that you swept away . . . I don't think they're going to fly together again and rise on the Day of Judgment. That's nonsense, to look at it that way. But then —"

"Go on," he urged softly, "tell me."

"Well, there's something. There's something you feel on Easter Sunday. Those crowds in the Piazza, and the band playing, and the feeling of spring. And everyone so happy! You must give yourself to it. You mustn't brood and think of death."

He began to laugh very softly. His laughter blew through her words like a mocking wind.

"Here!" He took her hand by the wrist. "Feel how thin I am. I'm disappearing. Don't you want to feed me for a few days? How long do you think I can live without eating? I've had to tie up my trousers with string. Go on, feel me." He led her hand by the wrist.

"Yes, you *are* thin. Poor Mario."

"I'd carry your valises, I'd buy your tickets, I'd polish your shoes. Can't you take me with you? Just for a while, just for a few days? Up there in Bardonechhia. . . ."

He told her about the white peaks of Bardonechhia, while the ferryboat took them back to the hotel. The canal was deserted, the gondolas were gone, the palaces seemed to dream in the dark night.

"Here," he said, pointing to the place on her map. "We change at Milan, and again at Turin, and then there's a little train that chugs up the mountain. You'll have three hours' sleep. I'll wake the clerk and have him make out your bill, and then in the morning . . ."

She was the first to wake in the morning. She rose somewhat dizzy from lack of sleep, and with swollen eyes. It was cold and dark. Venice was just a soiled brick wall beyond her window, a place to flee from. When she came down he was still asleep, in the leather armchair in the lobby. His head hung back, his mouth was open, his beard stood up stiffly. She thought of one of Holbein's unlovely and realistic paintings.

"Your valises," he said. "Where are they?"

He insisted on carrying them, and she followed him empty-handed through the streets. He almost ran. She could feel the weight of the valises pulling him, she could feel the

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quivering ache in his thin arms. At the Rialto they took the ferryboat to the station. The white palaces seemed to hold the promise of the day's light, but it was not yet morning, and the air had no color, and the sun still lurked in the eastern lands; perhaps Greece was already sunny, or Trieste across the sea.

They quarreled about the valises when they got off the ferry, and again when they got off the train, walking down the smoky platform with the morning crowds, rushing to begin the day in Milan. They quarreled because all her life she hated to see anyone burdened, even the strong porters who were paid for it.

"Mario, please. . . . You could give me one at least, just one."

But he shook his head, running ahead of her with the valises, pulled forward by their dreadful weight. And then suddenly he was gone. The crowds had swallowed him as a whirlpool swallows a stone. She felt faint. Her knees turned to water, carrying her numbly, and the marrow drained out of her bones. Like someone drowning, an infinite moment of memory stormed her brain. This was it, this was obviously it, subtly planned from the very first moment that they met. To rob her, to take everything she owned and go off without a word, perhaps smiling to himself wolfishly in his beard.

"*Mario . . . please, Mario . . .*"

She begged him soundlessly, she pleaded with him desperately inside herself. When, finally, she found him, he was coming toward her smiling, and empty-handed.

"Checked!" he said triumphantly, and gave her the tickets. "Now for some breakfast."

They ate in a clean little place near the station, and she urged him to eat everything. She half-expected to see his thinness disappear while he ate, but, of course, nothing happened. Then she paid with a crumpled lira note that tore into two halves when she opened it. The waiter promptly brought paper and mucilage to the table, and mended it.

"This Italian money!" she said in high amusement.

"Yes, of course!" He seemed angry. "It's rotten, isn't it? It's mouldy. It's just dirt." He was, for some reason, very bitter now. And she thought that after he had eaten — what was surely his first real meal in many days, even months — he would be quite different. But he spoke little, he seemed intensely preoccupied.

They went back to the station and took a poky train to Turin. It moved slowly and drowsily with many stops, like a beast pasturing, across a vast plain. There was nothing to see, only the factory chimneys in the distance, lifting black poisonous columns of smoke on the horizon. And she was bored, and there was no one else in the compartment, and Mario sat apart from her, remote and silent. She felt a little frightened of him now. He seemed so austere, austere

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and wolfish. Was it the skin drawn tightly over the cheekbones, the narrow eyes, the square apostolic beard? He had a way of caressing it with the back of his hand, fondly and tenderly, and the motion unnerved her.

"Mario . . . How did you look before the war?"

He fished out a photograph from his pocketbook and showed it to her. She saw a round, fleshy face with soft lips, unformed and innocent like a young bud. She looked at it and exclaimed admiringly . . . what else can one do when people show you photographs?

"Yes, but why do you wear a beard? You're so much nicer without it."

He half-smiled. "I feel different from the others, that's all. It's a distinction, it sets me apart."

"But that's wrong, Mario. You mustn't persist that way. Come down to earth, it's much better. I used to dream of being ravishingly beautiful, and all that. But you can never be more than you are. You have to make peace with life, come to terms with it. Look at me. I'm so much happier now than I used to be — now that I've cut off my beard, so to speak."

He looked at her, smiling, and touching his beard. But his eyes narrowed with two glittering points of anger.

"What did you do during the war?" he said suddenly. "You had a nice clean war — coffee and doughnuts to the soldiers! I know, it was clean and easy and exciting, and there's nothing you have to forget now — maybe just a soldier who made love to you. I hate it when people tell me to forget. Press a button —" his thumb stabbed the air — "press a button and it's over. Everything works in America by pressing a button. But suppose I refuse to press a button! I don't like being an idiot. Idiots never remember anything. Memory is what distinguishes animals from the human. Did you ever think of that?"

She moved away from him. She tried to put a distance between them, moving away toward the window, feeling alone and rejected. His eyes still held the hardness of his anger. He looked at her for a moment and then seized her by the neck. He pulled her back like a recalcitrant kitten.

"Look! Don't preach. Try to understand. There are times when I want to tear at someone. When I think . . . when I think of that garbage of bodies that I swept up, then I feel like tearing someone apart. It isn't making love the way you understand it. It's something else, more desperate. It's the worst kind of passion there is. But if you'll only let me. If you could be patient for a while and let anything happen to you . . ."

She struggled for breath, with her head down under his arm, and she had a feeling of suffocation, as if he were holding her head under water. Perhaps, if he had let her go

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one moment sooner, it wouldn't have happened. But he held her down while his other hand tore at her, kneading her desperately, like someone preparing bread in great hunger. She really thought she was drowning. There was even the illusion of water rushing over her, and with her eyes closed she felt as if something reached up from the depths of a vast dark sea to touch her, and then suddenly there was no further struggle, only an infinite yielding.

"I love you, Mario."

"Try!" he said, fiercely commanding and rather skeptical. But there was no way that she knew of trying; it was simply there in the form of a great tenderness for him, for everything about him — his thinness and his absurd beard, and his short stubby fingers that had touched her and now seemed filled with a life drawn from her body . . .

They were alone again in the train that climbed the mountain. The compartment smelled of damp leather, as if wet snowshoes had been left there. Nobody was going up the mountain, everyone was coming down. They passed trainloads of skiers returning to Turin. Their songs, their young voices, sounded strange and far away — sounds coming through glass from another world. They hardly spoke now. He was watching the mountains intently, leaning back with his eyes half-closed, like a painter studying his canvas. Now and then he smiled, secretly pleased with something. It made her jealous, the way he looked at the mountains — the way other men look at a woman, she thought.

After a while there were no more trainloads of skiers going down. The engine began to pant and labor painfully, bleating like a creature in distress. The slopes were steeper now and the snow blindingly white, and there were no more trees, only a few brave ones like the vanguard of an army, pushing toward the summits.

"Are you frightened?" he asked.

"No . . . why?"

"I always have a feeling of fear before I get to the summit. As though I had to face something terrible there. At first, just at first, and then —"

"But there's nothing to fear, *nothing!* Look, Mario." She touched him gently, trying to think of something to distract him. He seemed to her like a child afraid of the dark. It was not the dark, really, but the terrible whiteness and silence of the mountains. But he was afraid just the same, he was trembling.

"I'll tell you something funny," she said. "In Milan . . . in the station . . ." She began slowly in the tone of someone beginning a long fairy tale. But before she could continue, the train stopped. It had been going so slowly they hardly noticed it at first, but now there was absolute silence, no sound of anything, no movement.

"You'll tell me when we get off," he said wearily, and he got up and pulled the valises off the rack. Outside he knew the way; he did not even turn toward the little wooden station,

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but he took a path up the road, to the hotel. It was cold, she could see her breath leaving her mouth. *Psyche*, the Greeks called it . . . soul. And she wondered if it was cold in Greece. The packed snow swished under her feet, and there were stretches of soft ice that broke with a little snap and gurgle of water. For a moment she thought of other women who might have followed him just this way, panting after him on the snow toward the dreadful hotel that looked more like a barn than anything else.

And it was a dreadful, unheated room. She slipped her hand between the sheets and felt them damp and cold, as if the monstrous featherbed served only to conserve their chilliness.

"Now tell me," he said, "what was so funny in Milan?"

He had arranged the contents of his shabby little suitcase very quickly on the table, and he came over and put his hands on her shoulders, where she stood in front of the mirror. She saw the reflection of his face dark beside hers, and she felt the touch of his beard on her hair.

"You'll laugh," she said. "In Milan I had a dreadful moment. A bad quarter of an hour, as the French say. I thought, when you went off with my valises, when I lost you . . . It was silly, Mario. I thought you were going to steal them."

She felt his hands slipping from her shoulders. For a moment the reflection of his face stayed beside hers, and their eyes met in that other strange dimension of the mirror, and in his she saw a look of unspeakable reproach. Then she saw his hands moving. They clasped themselves around her neck, and for a moment he held her that way, gibbeted.

"You thought that?" he asked softly. "You took me for a thief? Come!"

He was smiling, while he pulled her backward toward the bed.

"Come, my love."

And still smiling he eased her down, and hung over her, half-sprawled on the bed.

"Are you comfortable? Don't you want to stretch out?"

She stretched out obediently, and raised her arms to him.

"Mario . . . poor Mario! I was so stupid!"

"Yes, of course. You're all stupid."

"I promise —"

His hands moved up. They moved up slowly, seeking, like two blind spiders, first her shoulders and then her throat. She lay very still, her eyes closed, and again she felt that delicious down-sinking into dark waters, where bodiless she floated, where nothing existed, where the world came to an end, except for the touch of his fingers on her flesh. Then she opened her eyes and looked at him reproachfully.

"Mario, you're hurting me!"

He shook his head. He was still smiling, but his eyes had no part in it. Hard and brilliant as ice, they seemed to have caught something from the snow outside, a reflection.

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Even in her terror, even while she struggled in terror, she thought about it. How could they, how could they reflect the white snow outside?

She struggled. She clutched at his hands, trying to pull them away from her throat. She clutched at his arms. How thin they were, thin and hard like two steel rivets, merciless . . . And suddenly she screamed.

"No!"

Then she heard the faraway sound of it drown in a thunder of water, blood-red now, that roared in her ears, flooding . . .

He too heard a roaring of terror, and he wanted to be somewhere, quickly, where there was only silence — whiteness and silence and infinite peace, enfolding him safely forever. He had the feeling that there in the mountains, as far as his strength would carry him, and not here in this cluttered room where she lay all broken and still, the real rendezvous awaited him. And he was late, terribly late; he had lingered foolishly, hoping . . .

He gathered his things quickly and ran down the stairs. There was a smell of fresh soap-suds in the big empty hall, and the sound of someone scrubbing noisily beyond the door. All sound would die away, all movement, all form and color! And this door that he opened now was the last door he would ever open. Because he knew . . . he would walk and never turn back!

He blinked at the blinding snow-light. For a moment it dazzled his eyes and held him at bay. Then he began to walk, full of purpose, on the path that led to the mountain; and he smiled subtly to himself with a premonition of pleasure, a mysterious pleasure that had no name, because that would be sound — and no form, because that would be woman. His eyes grew used to the light and often he looked toward the summit.

How good it was! How white and how silent!

Special Reminder for Hospitalized Veterans!

Deadline time is fast approaching for those hospitalized veterans who write mystery stories and would like to cash in on their talent. Contestants for the Mystery Story Annual Awards, sponsored and judged by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, must have their entries in by April 15. For details, see the 1952 HVWP "Contest News." All material should be mailed to Hospitalized Veterans Writing Project, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Ill. — on the double!

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THE MURDER IN NETHERBY GARDENS

by LORD DUNSANY

ONE DAY, WALKING EAST TO CATCH a train at Blackfriars with half an hour to spare, I passed near the Inner Temple and the fancy came to me to look in on Charles Stanter in his chambers there. Nobody who had been at All Angels in Stanter's time seemed to remember him very clearly — he had been so quiet. I suppose he had deliberately conserved the powers which later were to win him so much fame at the Bar, while others showered their gifts on the air all round them and were remembered, as meteors are, for a brief brilliance, even if they passed on afterwards into obscurity. Looking back now upon those forgotten names, I seem to remember a brilliant company. Do not ask me who they were, for the world never heard of them; and yet I feel sure they were brilliant. They had youth, for one thing; and some had other things besides. Well, few of those names are heard of now, and among that once brilliant company Charles Stanter had originally appeared dull. Now his career is so brilliant that I cannot recall the failure of a single case he defended. He had difficult cases too, many of them of murder. I should say, of alleged murder.

Well, the fancy came to me to see him again, and I rang the bell and was shown in by a maid, and there was Charles Stanter sitting in an armchair by his fire; and he rose to give me a kindly welcome.

We talked at first of old days at All Angels, and of the bright glow of many lost ambitions. And then I said, "I suppose you have had scores of interesting cases."

"Oh, not all of them," he said. "Some were extremely dull. But this one is interesting." And he pointed to a heap of papers lying under a heavy amethyst. "This has to do with a civic drainage system, and the water by which it is flushed. The source of the water is in dispute and, if it can be traced to the hill from which my clients contend it comes, then we shall be able to obtain an injunction against a firm which is diverting that water for the purpose of obtaining electrical power. The whole thing hangs on a right granted by Charles II in a warrant that the other side don't know we possess. There are a great many legal points in it that are of extreme interest."

"Have you any murder cases?" I asked.

"Yes, we have one coming up for trial soon," he said.

And at that moment his clerk came into the room.

"Where are the papers of the Plober case, Smurgin?" he said to him.

"Here, sir," said Smurgin.

And then he handed Stanter a

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bundle of manuscripts, untidily written, and Stanter handed it on to me.

"You might care to read it," he said.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It's a clear tale," he said. "You'll see, if you read it."

"Murder, you say?"

"Yes," he said, "murder."

"There's a thrill in murder," I said. "I'm sure that your drainage case is very interesting too, but I must say murder attracts me. I suppose it shouldn't. But somehow it seems to. This is nearer to it than I have ever been. I should like to read it, if you don't mind."

"Yes. Sit down," said Stanter. "Make yourself comfortable in that chair."

And I did. It was a fine armchair and a good fire. Stanter went over to his table and sat down over the heap of papers concerning the drainage system, and soon he was completely immersed in the case. I turned to the thick bundle of untidily written sheets and this is what I read. . . .

I went to see Mr. Inker, whom I have known for some years. He was not exactly a friend, but I have known him for some time. The object of my visit was purely private, and had nothing to do with what happened. I went to his house at 18 Netherby Gardens and rang the bell, and nobody answered. I rang again and again, but nobody came to the door. Then I wondered if the door in the areaway was unlocked, and I went down the area steps and sure enough it was. I opened the door and went in. There seemed to be nobody in the house; but I knew somehow that Mr. Inker would be there. And he was. I went up to the drawing room, and he wasn't there. But from a little room off it I heard a noise, and I saw him. I saw him before I had opened the door more than a few inches.

He was murdering a man.

He was murdering him with a knife. The man was on the floor, and Mr. Inker had already stabbed him, because the knife he was lifting up was covered with blood, and he was just going to put it in again when he saw me.

I've read of people saying that scenes like this paralyzed them, whether they meant it or not. It didn't have that effect on me. It set me thinking quicker than ever I thought before. And what I thought was that there was only one thing for Mr. Inker to do, now that I had seen what he was at, and that was to kill me too. He wouldn't want me going about, to give evidence against him. I saw that at once. So I went out of that room like the start of a race, and got onto the landing. Anything slower and he'd have had me. I heard him coming after me before I got to the door. He said never a word. Nor did I.

From the landing, the stairs went down to the hall and up to the top of the house. The obvious way was downstairs. But would there be time, with the little lead I had, to turn the

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knob of the latch and open the door and get through? That's what I wondered. And he wouldn't quite have to catch up with me. He could knife me from nearly a yard away. I thought there mightn't be time. And I didn't yet know what his pace was. But one thing I was sure of: downstairs was the obvious way. So I took the other.

He wasn't expecting that, and it gave me a bit more lead. I easily got to a bedroom before he was anywhere near, and locked myself in. Still he had not spoken a word. Nor had I.

You may wonder why I went into a bedroom instead of trying to get out of the house. But I had to plan; it was no use rushing wildly about. I had not planned anything yet, but I was going to plan quietly in that bedroom. It opened into another room, and I locked that door too. Then I went to look at the window, to see what I could do from there. But there were no means of escaping that way. So I turned back to the room. Mr. Inker was now outside the door, and had not even turned the handle. He must have heard me lock it.

And then I saw a telephone at the head of the bed. I couldn't want anything better than that, and I took the receiver off. Before I had spoken I heard him rushing downstairs. Then I said, "Hullo!" I said it two or three times, and then I got an answer. I asked for the police. But I got no answer then: at that moment the telephone went dead.

He must have cut the wire with his knife. What was I to do next? It was no good staying in that room any longer, and it was no good being any other place he knew of. So I unlocked the door and slipped out and went still higher. No good going down. He was between me and the downstairs door. If I went up, I hoped I might get away over the roof.

So I went right up to the attic. And there I found a long, uncarpeted, empty passage — empty but for one cupboard halfway down — and a turn at the end to some dingy place unlighted by any window. The cupboard was rather an obvious hiding place — a tall thing, with no shelves in it, that would hide me nicely. But I had not been doing obvious things all along, so I thought he would expect me to go on to the end of the passage and make for the dingy part of it. I don't know why I thought this, but I was thinking very quickly, and knew he would be doing so too. You see, both our lives were at stake. I was sure he would first go to the end of the passage and then take the cupboard on his way back. It would have been nasty if he had come straight for the cupboard. I had planned to shove both doors violently open, if he did, and then run. Anyway, I thought he was going to the end of the passage — when he came.

He walked a few steps past the cupboard, and then I heard him turn back. Then I thought he was going to open the cupboard door. He actually

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stopped in front of it and listened, and I was just about to burst out on him and make my desperate bid to get away, with nothing to help me but a moment's surprise, when he turned quickly away and went down the stairs.

That puzzled me. He must know, I said to myself, that I am not downstairs. He was hurrying, too, as though he were after something. But we two were alone in the house, except for the dead man, the man Mr. Inker had murdered.

It never occurred to me that he knew perfectly well where I was. I heard his footsteps growing fainter and fainter, and listened till the last of them died away, far down at the foot of the stairs. I had no idea what he was up to. You see, I had been trying to surprise him all the time: now he was trying to surprise me, and I wondered what the surprise would be. It was very still in the house and I had plenty of time to wonder, and nothing to disturb my wondering. I thought of lots of things that he might be doing, but never thought of the right one. I assure you, I never guessed what he would do. I hadn't the faintest idea of it. It never entered my mind. It was a shock when I found out.

There's nothing more to tell. You know that he came back with a policeman, and that I was arrested for the murder that Mr. Inker himself had committed. They found me hiding in the cupboard, with the knife on the floor outside. He had thrown it down there. I've asked the Inspector about fingerprints more than once; but he says that there were none. I pointed out that Mr. Inker could have cleaned the knife just as well as I could have. But they won't listen to me. . . .

I looked up from this dark story into the light of the room, and felt as though I had left dim caverns for daylight, with a moment of relief that it would have taken Dante to picture. Stanter was still bending over his other case, and brooding upon its intricacies, as though he had forgotten that I was there — as I had forgotten Blackfriars and the train I had meant to catch.

"What do you make of it?" I asked.

Stanter looked up with a start. And then he said, "It's a perfectly clear story. That is the case for my client. Our whole defense will be based on it."

"But what really happened?" I asked.

"Oh, that," he said, "will be for a jury to say."

"Q"

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Most American fans are unaware that between 1933 and 1935, Dorothy L. Sayers, creator of Lord Peter Wimsey, turned detective-story critic, and wrote a series of reviews for the London "Sunday Times." Descriptions of these critiques have grapevined across the Atlantic, and the adjective most often used to characterize Miss Sayers's private-eye perception has been "remarkable."

From time to time we shall take the liberty of quoting a random passage or two from Miss Sayers's criminological commentaries. For instance: she recalls that many readers of detective novels are supposed to have "a prejudice against short stories. Yet the world's greatest reputation in detective stories [Miss Sayers reminds us] was built up on the short story. There are only four full-length Sherlock Holmes novels: the rest of that enormous fame is a short story achievement."

And here's another Sayersian excerpt: "Plot is not everything, style is not everything; only by combining them can we get a detective story that is also good literature."

THE HAUNTED POLICEMAN

by DOROTHY L. SAYERS

Good God!" said his lordship. "Did I do that?"

"All the evidence points that way," replied his wife.

"Then I can only say that I never knew so convincing a body of evidence produce such an inadequate result."

The nurse appeared to take this reflection personally. She said in a tone of rebuke: "He's a *beautiful* boy."

"H'm," said Peter. He adjusted his eyeglass carefully. "Well, you're the expert witness. Hand him over."

The nurse did so, with a dubious air. She was relieved to see that this disconcerting parent handled the child competently; as, in a man who was an experienced uncle, was not, after all, so very surprising. Lord Peter sat down gingerly on the bed.

"Do you feel it's up to standard?" he inquired with some anxiety. "Of course, *your* workmanship's always sound — but you never know with these collaborate efforts."

"I think it'll do," said Harriet.

"Good." He turned abruptly to the nurse. "All right; we'll keep it. Take it and put it away, and tell 'em to invoice it to me. It's a very interesting addition to you, Harriet; but it would have been a hell of a rotten substitute." His voice wavered a little, for in the last twenty-four hours he had had the fright of his life.

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The doctor, who had been doing something in the other room, entered in time to catch the last words.

"There was never any likelihood of that, you goop," he said, cheerfully. "Now, you've seen all there is to be seen, and you'd better run away and play." He led his charge firmly to the door. "Go to bed," he advised him in kindly accents; "you look all in."

"I'm all right," said Peter. "I haven't been doing anything. And look here——" He stabbed a belligerent finger in the direction of the adjoining room. "Tell those nurses of yours, if I want to pick my son up, I'll pick him up. If his mother wants to kiss him, she can kiss him. I'll have none of your infernal hygiene in *my* house."

"Very well," said the doctor, "just as you like. Anything for a quiet life. I rather believe in a few healthy germs myself. Builds up resistance. No, thanks, I won't have a drink. I've got to go to another one, and an alcoholic breath impairs confidence."

"Another one?" said Peter, aghast.

"One of my hospital mothers. You're not the only fish in the sea by a long chalk. One born every minute."

"God! what a world." They passed down the great curved stair. In the hall a sleepy footman clung, yawning, to his post of duty.

"All right, William," said Peter. "Buzz off now; I'll lock up." He let the doctor out. "Good night — and thanks very much, old man. I'm sorry I swore at you."

"They mostly do," replied the doctor philosophically. "Well, bung-ho, Flim. I'll look in again later, just to earn my fee, but I shan't be wanted. You've married into a good tough family, and I congratulate you."

The car, spluttering and protesting a little after its long wait in the cold, drove off, leaving Peter alone on the doorstep. Now that it was all over and he could go to bed, he felt extraordinarily wakeful. He would have liked to go to a party. He leaned back against the wrought-iron railings and lit a cigarette, staring vaguely into the lamp-lit dusk of the square. It was thus that he saw the policeman.

The blue-uniformed figure came up from the direction of South Audley Street. He too was smoking, and he walked, not with the firm tramp of a constable on his beat, but with the hesitating step of a man who has lost his bearings. When he came in sight he had pushed back his helmet and was rubbing his head in a puzzled manner. Official habit made him look sharply at the bare-headed gentleman in evening dress, abandoned on a doorstep at three in the morning, but since the gentleman appeared to be sober and bore no signs of being about to commit a felony, he averted his gaze and prepared to pass on.

" 'Morning, officer," said the gentleman, as he came abreast with him.

" 'Morning, sir," said the policeman.

"You're off duty early," pursued Peter, who wanted somebody to talk to. "Come in and have a drink."

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This offer reawakened all the official suspicion.

"Not just now, sir, thank you," replied the policeman guardedly.

"Yes, now. That's the point." Peter tossed away his cigarette. It described a fiery arc in the air and shot out a little train of sparks as it struck the pavement. "I've got a son."

"Oh, ah!" said the policeman, relieved by this innocent confidence. "Your first, eh?"

"And last, if I know anything about it."

"That's what my brother says, every time," said the policeman. "Never no more, he says. He's got eleven. Well, sir, good luck to it. I see how you're situated, and thank you kindly, but after what the sergeant said I dunno as I better. Though if I was to die this moment, not a drop 'as passed me lips since me supper beer."

Peter put his head on one side and considered this.

"The sergeant said you were drunk?"

"He did, sir."

"And you were not?"

"No, sir. I saw everything just the same as I told him, though what's become of it now is more than I can say. But drunk I was not, sir."

"Then," said Peter, "as Mr. Joseph Surface remarked to Lady Teazle, what is troubling you is the consciousness of your own innocence. He insinuated that you had looked on the wine when it was red — you'd better come in and make it so. You'll feel better."

The policeman hesitated.

"Well, sir, I dunno. Fact is, I've had a bit of a shock."

"So've I," said Peter. "Come in for God's sake and keep me company."

"Well, sir ——" said the policeman again. He mounted the steps.

The logs in the hall chimney were glowing a deep red through their ashes. Peter raked them apart, so that the young flame shot up between them. "Sit down," he said; "I'll be back in a moment."

The policeman sat down, removed his helmet, and stared about him, trying to remember who occupied the big house at the corner of the Square. The engraved coat-of-arms upon the great silver bowl on the chimney-piece told him nothing, even though it was repeated in color upon the backs of two tapestried chairs: three white mice skipping upon a black ground. Peter, returning quietly from the shadows beneath the stair, caught him as he traced the outlines with a thick finger.

"A student of heraldry?" he said. "Seventeenth-century work and not very graceful. You're new to this beat, aren't you? My name's Wimsey."

He put down a tray on the table.

"If you'd rather have beer or whiskey, say so. These bottles are only a concession to my mood."

The policeman eyed the long necks and bulging silver-wrapped corks with curiosity. "Champagne?" he said. "Never tasted it, sir. But I'd like to try the stuff."

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"You'll find it thin," said Peter, "but if you drink enough of it, you'll tell me the story of your life." The cork popped, and the wine frothed out into the wide glasses.

"Well!" said the policeman. "Here's to your good lady, sir, and the new young gentleman. Long life and all the best. A bit in the nature of cider, ain't it, sir?"

"Just a trifle. Give me your opinion after the third glass, if you can put up with it so long. And thanks for your good wishes. You a married man?"

"Not yet, sir. Hoping to be when I get promotion. If only the sergeant — but that's neither here nor there. You been married long, sir, if I may ask?"

"Just over a year."

"Ah! and do you find it comfortable, sir?"

Peter laughed.

"I've spent the past twenty-four hours wondering why, when I'd had the blazing luck to get onto a perfectly good thing, I should be fool enough to risk the whole show on a silly experiment."

The policeman nodded sympathetically.

"I see what you mean, sir. Seems to me, life's like that. If you don't take risks, you get nowhere. If you do, they may go wrong, and then where are you? And 'alf the time, when things happen, they happen first, before you can even think about 'em."

"Quite right," said Peter, and filled the glasses again. He found the policeman soothing. True to his class and training, he turned naturally in moments of emotion to the company of the common man. Indeed, when the recent domestic crisis had threatened to destroy his nerve, he had headed for the butler's pantry with the swift instinct of the homing pigeon. There, they had treated him with great humanity, and allowed him to clean the silver.

With a mind oddly clarified by champagne and lack of sleep, he watched the constable's reaction to Pol Roger 1926. The first glass had produced a philosophy of life; the second produced a name — Alfred Burt — and further hints of some mysterious grievance against the station sergeant; the third glass, as prophesied, produced the story.

"You were right, sir" (said the policeman), "when you spotted I was new to the beat. I only come on it at the beginning of the week, and that accounts for me not being acquainted with you, sir, nor with most of the residents about here. Jessop, now, he knows everybody, and so did Pinker — but he's been took off to another division. You'd remember Pinker — big chap, make two o' me, with a sandy mustache. Yes, I thought you would.

"Well, sir, as I was saying, me knowing the district in a general way, but not, so to speak, like the palm o' me 'and, might account for me making a bit of a fool of myself, but it don't account for me seeing what I did see. See it I did, and not drunk

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nor nothing like it. And as for making a mistake in the number, well, that might happen to anybody. All the same, sir, 13 was the number I see, plain as the nose on your face."

"You can't put it stronger than that," said Peter, whose nose was of a kind difficult to overlook.

"You know Merriman's End, sir?"

"I think I do. Isn't it a long cul-de-sac running somewhere at the back of South Audley Street, with a row of houses on one side and a high wall on the other?"

"That's right, sir. Tall, narrow houses they are, all alike, with deep porches and pillars to them."

"Yes. Like an escape from the worst square in Pimlico. Horrible. Fortunately, I believe the street was never finished, or we should have had another row of the monstrosities on the opposite side. This house is pure eighteenth century. How does it strike you?"

P. C. Burt contemplated the wide hall — the Adam fireplace and paneling with their graceful shallow moldings, the pedimented doorways, the high roundheaded window lighting hall and gallery, the noble proportions of the stair. He sought for a phrase.

"It's a gentleman's house," he pronounced at length. "Room to breathe, if you see what I mean. Seems like you couldn't act vulgar in it." He shook his head. "Mind you, I wouldn't call it cosy. It ain't the place I'd choose to sit down to a kipper in me shirtsleeves. But it's got class. I never thought about it before, but now you mention it I see what's wrong with them other houses in Merriman's End. They're sort of squeezed-like. I been into more'n one o' them tonight, and that's what they are; they're squeezed. But I was going to tell you about that.

"Just upon midnight it was" (pursued the policeman) "when I turns into Merriman's End in the ordinary course of my dooties. I'd got pretty near down towards the far end, when I see a fellow lurking about in a suspicious way under the wall. There's back gates there, you know, sir, leading into some gardens, and this chap was hanging about inside one of the gateways. A rough-looking fellow, in a baggy old coat — might a-been a tramp off the Embankment. I turned my light on him — that street's not very well lit, and it's a dark night — but I couldn't see much of his face, because he had on a ragged old hat and a big scarf round his neck. I thought he was up to no good, and I was just about to ask him what he was doing there, when I hear a most awful yell come out o' one o' them houses opposite. Ghastly it was, sir. 'Help!' it said. 'Murder! help!' fit to freeze your marrow."

"Man's voice or woman's?"

"Man's, sir, I think. More of a roaring kind of yell, if you take my meaning. I says, 'Hullo! What's up there? Which house is it?' The chap says nothing, but he points, and him and me runs across together. Just as we gets to the house, there's a noise

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like as if someone was being strangled just inside, and a thump, as it might be something falling against the door."

"Good God!" said Peter.

"I gives a shout and rings the bell. 'Hoy!' I says. 'What's up here?' and then I knocks on the door. There's no answer, so I rings and knocks again. Then the chap who was with me, he pushes open the letter-flap and squints through it."

"Was there a light in the house?"

"It was all dark, sir, except the fanlight over the door. That was lit up bright, and when I looks up, I see the number of the house — No. 13, painted plain as you like on the transom. Well, this chap peers in, and all of a sudden he gives a kind of gurgle and falls back. 'Here!' I says, 'what's amiss? Let me have a look.' So I puts me eye to the flap and I looks in."

P. C. Burt paused and drew a long breath. Peter cut the wire of the second bottle.

"Now, sir," said the policeman, "believe me or believe me not, I was as sober at that moment as I am now. I can tell you everything I see in that house, same as if it was wrote up there on that wall. Not as it was a great lot, because the flap wasn't all that wide, but by squinnying a bit, I could make shift to see right across the hall and a piece on both sides and part way up the stairs. And here's what I see, and you take notice of every word, on account of what came after."

He took another gulp of the Pol Roger to loosen his tongue and continued:

"There was the floor of the hall. I could see that very plain. All black and white squares it was, like marble, and it stretched back a good long way. About halfway along, on the left, was the staircase, with a red carpet, and the statue of a white naked woman at the foot, carrying a big pot full of blue and yellow flowers. In the wall next the stairs there was an open door, and a room all lit up. I could just see the end of a table, with a lot of glass and silver on it. Between that door and the front door there was a big black cabinet, shiny with gold figures painted on it, like them things they had at the Exhibition. Right at the back of the hall there was a place like a conservatory, but I couldn't see what was in it, only it looked very gay. There was a door on the right, and that was open, too. A very pretty drawing-room, by what I could see of it, with pale-blue paper and pictures on the walls. There were pictures in the hall, too, and a table on the right with a copper bowl, like as it might be for visitors' cards to be put in. Now, I see all that, sir, and I put it to you, if it hadn't a' been there, how could I describe it so plain?"

"I have known people describe what wasn't there," said Peter thoughtfully, "but it was seldom anything of that kind. Rats, cats, and snakes I have heard of, and occasionally naked female figures; but delirious lacquer cabinets and hall-tables are new to me."

"As you say, sir," agreed the po-

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liceman, "and I see you believe me so far. But here's something else, what you mayn't find quite so easy. There was a man laying in that hall, sir, as sure as I sit here, and he was dead. He was a big man and clean-shaven, and he wore evening dress. Somebody had stuck a knife into his throat. I could see the handle of it — it looked like a carving-knife, and the blood had run out, all shiny, over the marble squares."

The policeman looked at Peter, passed his handkerchief over his forehead, and finished the fourth glass of champagne.

"His head was up against the end of the hall table," he went on, "and his feet must have been up against the door, but I couldn't see anything quite close to me, because of the letter-box. You understand, sir, I was looking through the wire cage of the box, and there was something inside — letters, I suppose — that cut off my view downwards. But I see all the rest — in front and a bit of both sides; and it must have been regularly burnt in upon me brain, as they say, for I don't suppose I was looking more than a quarter of a minute or so. Then all the lights went out at once, same as if somebody had turned off the main switch. So I looks round, and I don't mind telling you I felt a bit queer. And *when* I looks round, lo and behold! my bloke in the muffler had hopped it."

"The devil he had," said Peter.

"Hopped it," repeated the policeman, "and there I was. And just there, sir, is where I made my big mistake, for I thought he couldn't a-got far, and I started off up the street after him. But I couldn't see him, and I couldn't see nobody. All the houses was dark, and it come over me what a sight of funny things may go on and nobody take a mite o' notice. The way I'd shouted and banged on the door, you'd a-thought it'd a-brought out every soul in the street, not to mention that awful yelling. But there — you may have noticed it yourself, sir. A man may leave his ground-floor windows open, or have his chimney a-fire, and you may make noise enough to wake the dead, trying to draw his attention, and nobody give no heed. He's fast asleep, and the neighbors say, 'Blast that row, but it's no business of mine,' and stick their 'eads under the bedclothes."

"Yes," said Peter. "London's like that."

"That's right, sir. A village is different. You can't pick up a pin there without somebody coming up to ask where you got it from — but London keeps itself to itself. . . . Well, something'll have to be done, I thinks to myself, and I blows me whistle. They heard that all right. Windows started to go up all along the street. That's London, too."

Peter nodded. "London will sleep through the last trump. Puddley-in-the-Rut and Doddering-in-the-Dumps will look down their noses and put on virtuous airs. But God, Who is never surprised, will say to His angel, 'Whistle 'em up, Michael,

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whistle 'em up; East and West will rise from the dead at the sound of the policeman's whistle.' "

"Quite so, sir," said P. C. Burt; and wondered for the first time whether there might not be something in this champagne stuff after all. He waited for a moment and then resumed:

"Well, it so happened that just when I sounded my whistle, Withers — that's the man on the other beat — was in Audley Square, coming to meet me. You know, sir, we has times for meeting one another, arranged different-like every night; and 12 o'clock in the square was our rendy-voos tonight. So up he comes in, you might say, no time at all, and finds me there, with everyone a-hollering at me from the windows to know what was up. Well, naturally I didn't want the whole bunch of 'em running out into the street and our man getting away in the crowd, so I just tells 'em there's nothing, only a bit of an accident farther along. And then I see Withers and glad enough I was. We stands there at the top o' the street, and I tells him there's a dead man laying in the hall at No. 13, and it looks to me like murder. 'Number 13?' he says, 'you can't mean No. 13. There ain't no No. 13 in Merriman's End, you fathead; it's all even numbers.' And so it is, sir, for the houses on the other side were never built, so there's no odd numbers at all.

"Well, that give me a bit of a jolt. I wasn't so much put out at not having remembered about the numbers, for as I tell you, I never was on the beat before this week. No; but I knew I'd seen that there number writ up plain as pie on the fanlight, and I didn't see how I could have been mistaken. But when Withers heard the rest of the story, he thought maybe I'd misread it for No. 12. It couldn't be 18, for there's only the eight houses in the road; nor it couldn't be 16 neither, for I knew it wasn't the end house. But we thought it might be 12 or 10; so away we goes to look.

"We didn't have no difficulty about getting in at No. 12. There was a very pleasant old gentleman came down in his dressing-gown, asking what the disturbance was, and could he be of use. I apologized for disturbing him, and said I was afraid there'd been an accident in one of the houses, and had he heard anything. Of course, the minute he opened the door I could see it wasn't No. 12 we wanted; there was only a little hall with polished boards, and the walls plain paneled — all very bare and neat — and no black cabinet nor naked woman nor nothing. The old gentleman said, yes, his son had heard somebody shouting and knocking a few minutes earlier. He'd got up and put his head out of the window, but couldn't see nothing, but they thought from the sound it was No. 14 forgotten his latch-key again. So we thanked him very much and went on to No. 14.

"We had a bit of a job to get No. 14 downstairs. A fiery sort of gentleman he was, something in the military way, I thought, but he turned out to

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be a retired Indian Civil Servant. A dark gentleman, with a big voice, and his servant was dark, too. The gentleman wanted to know what the blazes all this row was about, and why a decent citizen wasn't allowed to get his proper sleep. He supposed that young fool at No. 12 was drunk again. Withers had to speak a bit sharp to him; but at last the servant came down and let us in. Well, we had to apologize once more. The hall was not a bit like — the staircase was on the wrong side, for one thing, and though there was a statue at the foot of it, it was some kind of a heathen idol with a lot of heads and arms, and the walls were covered with all sorts of brass stuff and native goods — you know the kind of thing. There was a black-and-white linoleum on the floor and that was about all there was to it. The servant had a soft sort of way with him I didn't half like. He said he slept at the back and had heard nothing till his master rang for him. Then the gentleman came to the top of the stairs and shouted out it was no use disturbing him; the noise came from No. 12 as usual, and if that young man didn't stop his blanky Bohemian goings-on, he'd have the law on his father. I asked if he'd seen anything, and he said, no, he hadn't. Of course, sir, me and that other chap was inside the porch, and you can't see anything what goes on inside those porches from the other houses, because they're filled in at the sides with colored glass — all the lot of them."

Lord Peter Wimsey looked at the policeman and then looked at the bottle, as though estimating the alcoholic content of each. With deliberation, he filled both glasses again.

"Well, sir," said P. C. Burt, after refreshing himself, "by this time Withers was looking at me in rather an old-fashioned manner. However, he said nothing, and we went back to No. 10, where there was two maiden ladies and a hall full of stuffed birds and wallpaper like a florist's catalogue. The one who slept in the front was deaf as a post, and the one who slept at the back hadn't heard nothing. But we got hold of their maids, and the cook said she'd heard the voice calling 'Help!' and thought it was in No. 12, and she'd hid her head in the pillow and said her prayers. The housemaid was a sensible girl. She'd looked out when she'd heard me knocking. She couldn't see anything at first, owing to us being in the porch, but she thought something must be going on, so, not wishing to catch cold, she went back to put on her bedroom slippers. When she got back to the window, she was just in time to see a man running up the road. He went very quick and very silent, as if he had goloshes on, and she could see the ends of his muffler flying out behind him. She saw him run out of the street and turn to the right, and then she heard me coming along after him. Unfortunately, her eye being on the man, she didn't notice which porch I came out of. Well, that showed I wasn't inventing the whole

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story at any rate, because there was my bloke in the muffler. The girl didn't recognize him at all, but that wasn't surprising, because she'd only just entered the old ladies' service. Besides, it wasn't likely the man had anything to do with it, because he was outside with me when the yelling started. My belief is, he was the sort as doesn't care to have his pockets examined too close, and the minute my back was turned he thought he'd be better and more comfortable elsewhere.

"Now there ain't no need" (continued the policeman), "for me to trouble you, sir, with all them houses what we went into. We made inquiries at the whole lot, from No. 2 to No. 16, and there wasn't one of them had a hall in any ways conformable to what that chap and I saw through the letter-box. Nor there wasn't a soul in 'em could give us any help more than what we'd had already. You see, sir, though it took me a bit o' time telling, it all went very quick. There was the yells; they didn't last beyond a few seconds or so, and before they was finished, we was across the road and inside the porch. Then there was me shouting and knocking; but I hadn't been long at that afore the chap with me looks through the box. Then I has my look inside, for fifteen seconds it might be, and while I'm doing that, my chap's away up the street. Then I runs after him, and then I blows me whistle. The whole thing might take a minute or a minute and a half. Not more.

"Well, sir; by the time we'd been into every house in Merriman's End, I was feeling a bit queer again, I can tell you, and Withers, he was looking queerer. He says to me, 'Burt,' he says, 'is this your idea of a joke? Because if so, the 'Olborn Empire's where you ought to be, not the police force.' So I tells him over again, most solemn, what I seen — 'and,' I says, 'if only we could lay hands on that chap in the muffler, he could tell you he seen it, too. And what's more,' I says, 'do you think I'd risk me job, playing a silly trick like that?' He says, 'Well, it beats me,' he says. 'If I didn't know you was a sober kind of chap, I'd say you was seein' things.'

"'Things?' I says to him. 'I see that there corpse a-layin' there with the knife in his neck, and that was enough for me. 'Orrible, he looked, and the blood all over the floor.' 'Well,' he says, 'maybe he wasn't dead after all, and they've cleared him out of the way.' 'And cleared the house away too, I suppose,' I said to him. So Withers says, in an odd sort o' voice, 'You're sure about the house? You wasn't letting your imagination run away with you over naked females and such?' That was a nice thing to say. I said, 'No, I wasn't. There's been some monkey business going on in this street and I'm going to get to the bottom of it, if we has to comb out London for that chap in the muffler.' 'Yes,' says Withers, nasty like, 'it's a pity he cleared off so sudden.' 'Well,' I says, 'you can't say I imagined *him*, anyhow, because that

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there girl saw him, and a mercy she did,' I said, 'or you'd be saying next I ought to be in Colney Hatch.' 'Well,' he says, 'I dunno what you think you're going to do about it. You better ring up the station and ask for instructions.'

"Which I did. And Sergeant Jones, he come down himself, and he listens attentive-like to what we both has to say, and then he walks along the street, slow-like, from end to end. And then he comes back and says to me, 'Now, Burt,' he says, 'just you describe that hall to me again, careful.' Which I does, same as I described it to you, sir. And he says, 'You're sure there was the room on the left of the stairs with the glass and silver on the table; and the room on the right with the pictures in it?' And I says, 'Yes, Sergeant, I'm quite sure of that.' And Withers says, 'Ah!' in a kind of got-you-now voice, if you take my meaning. And the sergeant says, 'Now, Burt,' he says, 'pull yourself together and take a look at these here houses. Don't you see they're all single-fronted? There ain't one on 'em has rooms *both* sides o' the front hall. Look at the windows, you fool,' he says."

Lord Peter poured out the last of the champagne.

"I don't mind telling you, sir" (went on the policeman), "that I was fair knocked silly. To think of me never noticing that! Withers had noticed it all right, and that's what made him think I was drunk or barmy. But I stuck to what I'd seen. I said, there must be two of them houses knocked into one, somewhere; but that didn't work, because we'd been into all of them, and there wasn't no such thing — not without there was one o' them concealed doors like you read about in crook stories. 'Well, anyhow,' I says to the sergeant, 'the yells was real all right, because other people heard 'em. Just you ask, and they'll tell you.' So the sergeant says, 'Well, Burt, I'll give you every chance.'

"So he knocks up No. 12 again — not wishing to annoy No. 14 any more than he was already — and this time the son comes down. An agreeable gentleman he was, too; not a bit put out. He says, Oh, yes, he'd heard the yells and his father'd heard them too. 'No. 14,' he says, 'that's where the trouble is. A very odd bloke, is No. 14, and I shouldn't be surprised if he beats that unfortunate servant of his. The Englishman abroad, you know! The outposts of Empire and all that kind of thing. They're rough and ready — and then the curry in them parts is bad for the liver.' So I was for inquiring at No. 14 again; but the sergeant, he loses patience, and says, 'You know quite well,' he says, 'it ain't No. 14, and, in my opinion, Burt, you're either dotty or drunk. You best go home straight away,' he says, 'and sober up, and I'll see you again when you can give a better account of yourself.' So I argues a bit, but it ain't no use, and away he goes, and Withers goes back to his beat. And I walks up and down a bit till

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Jessop comes to take over, and then I comes away, and that's when I sees you, sir.

"But I ain't drunk, sir — at least, I wasn't then, though there do seem to be a kind of a swimming in me head at this moment. Maybe that stuff's stronger than it tastes. But I wasn't drunk then, and I'm pretty sure I'm not dotty. I'm haunted, sir, that's what it is — haunted. It might be there was someone killed in one of them houses a many years ago, and that's what I see tonight. Perhaps they changed the numbering of the street on account of it — I've heard tell of such things — and when the same night comes round, the house goes back to what it was before. But there I am, with a black mark against me, and it ain't a fair trick for no ghost to go getting a plain man into trouble. And I'm sure, sir, you'll agree with me."

The policeman's narrative had lasted some time, and the hands of the grandfather clock stood at a quarter to five. Peter Wimsey gazed benevolently at his companion, for whom he was beginning to feel a positive affection. He was, if anything, slightly more drunk than the policeman, for he had missed tea and had no appetite for his dinner; but the wine had not clouded his wits; it had only increased excitability and postponed sleep. He said:

"When you looked through the letter-box, could you see any part of the ceiling, or the lights?"

"No, sir; on account, you see, of the flap. I could see right and left and straight forward; but not upwards, and none of the near part of the floor."

"When you looked at the house from outside, there was no light except through the fanlight. But when you looked through the flap, all the rooms were lit, right and left and at the back?"

"That's so, sir."

"Are there back doors to the houses?"

"Yes, sir. Coming out of Merriman's End, you turn to the right, and there's an opening a little way along which takes you to the back doors."

"You seem to have a very distinct visual memory. I wonder if your other kinds of memory are as good. Can you tell me, for instance, whether any of the houses you went into had any particular smell? Especially 10, 12, and 14?"

"Smell, sir?" The policeman closed his eyes to stimulate recollection. "Why, yes, sir. No. 10, where the two ladies live, that had a sort of an old-fashioned smell. I can't put me tongue to it. Not lavender — but something as ladies keeps in bowls and such — rose-leaves and what not. Potpourri, that's the stuff. Potpourri. And No. 12 — well, no, there was nothing particular there, except I remember thinking they must keep pretty good servants, though we didn't see anybody except the family. All that floor and paneling was polished beautiful — you could see your face in it. Beeswax and turpentine, I says to meself.

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And elbow-grease. What you'd call a clean house with a good, clean smell. But No. 14 — that was different. I didn't like the smell of that. Stuffy, like as if the servant had been burning some o' that there incense to his idols, maybe."

"Ah!" said Peter. "What you say is very suggestive." He placed his fingertips together and shot his last question over them:

"Ever been inside the National Gallery?"

"No, sir," said the policeman, astonished. "I can't say as I ever was."

"That's London again," said Peter. "We're the last people in the world to know anything of our great metropolitan institutions. Now, what is the best way to tackle this bunch of toughs, I wonder? It's a little early for a call. Still, there's nothing like doing one's good deed before breakfast, and the sooner you're set right with the sergeant, the better. Let me see. Yes — I think that may do it. Costume pieces are not as a rule in my line, but my routine has been so much upset already, one way and another, that an irregularity more or less will hardly matter. Wait here for me while I have a bath and change. I may be a little time; but it would hardly be decent to get there before six."

The bath had been an attractive thought, but was perhaps ill-advised, for a curious languor stole over him with the touch of the hot water. The champagne was losing its effervescence. It was with an effort that he dragged himself out and reawakened himself with a cold shower.

The matter of dress required a little thought. A pair of gray flannel trousers was easily found, and though they were rather too well creased for the part he meant to play, he thought that with luck they would probably pass unnoticed. The shirt was a difficulty. His collection of shirts was a notable one, but they were mostly of an inconspicuous and gentlemanly sort. He hesitated for some time over a white shirt with an open sports collar, but decided at length upon a blue one, bought as an experiment and held to be not quite successful. A red tie, if he had possessed such a thing, would have been convincing. After some consideration, he remembered that he had seen his wife in a rather wide Liberty tie, whose prevailing color was orange. That, he felt, would do if he could find it. On her it had looked rather well; on him, it would be completely abominable.

He went through into the next room; it was queer to find it empty. A peculiar sensation came over him. Here *he* was, rifling his wife's drawers, and there *she* was, spirited out of reach at the top of the house with a couple of nurses and an entirely new baby, which might turn into goodness knew what. He sat down before the glass and stared at himself. He felt as though he ought to have changed somehow in the night; but he only looked unshaven and, he thought, a trifle intoxicated. Both were quite good things to look at the moment,

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though hardly suitable for the father of a family. He pulled out all the drawers in the dressing-table; they emitted vaguely familiar smells of face-powder and handkerchief sachet. He tried the big built-in wardrobe: frocks, costumes, and trays full of underwear, which made him feel sentimental. At last he struck a promising vein of gloves and stockings. The next tray held ties, the orange of the desired Liberty creation gleaming in a friendly way among them. He put it on, and observed with pleasure that the effect was Bohemian beyond description.

He wandered out again, leaving all the drawers open behind him as though a burglar had passed through the room. An ancient tweed jacket of his own, of a very countrified pattern, suitable only for fishing in Scotland, was next unearthed, together with a pair of brown canvas shoes. He secured his trousers by a belt, searched for and found an old soft-brimmed felt hat of no recognizable color, and, after removing a few trout-flies from the hat-band and tucking his shirt-sleeves well up inside the coat-sleeve, decided that he would do. As an afterthought, he returned to his wife's room and selected a wide woolen scarf in a shade of greenish blue. Thus equipped, he came downstairs again, to find P. C. Burt fast asleep, with his mouth open and snoring.

Peter was hurt. Here he was, sacrificing himself in the interests of this policeman, and the man hadn't the common decency to appreciate it. However, there was no point in waking him yet. He yawned horribly and sat down. . . .

It was the footman who wakened the sleepers at half-past six. If he was surprised to see his master, very strangely attired, slumbering in the hall in company with a large policeman, he was too well trained to admit the fact even to himself. He merely removed the tray. The faint clink of glass roused Peter, who slept like a cat at all times.

"Hullo, William," he said. "Have I overslept myself? What's the time?"

"Five and twenty to seven, my lord."

"Just about right." He remembered that the footman slept on the top floor. "All quiet on the Western Front, William?"

"Not altogether quiet, my lord." William permitted himself a slight smile. "The young master was lively about five. But all satisfactory, I gather from Nurse Jenkyn."

"Nurse Jenkyn? Is that the young one? Don't let yourself be run away with, William. I say, just give P. C. Burt a light prod in the ribs, would you? He and I have business together."

In Merriman's End, the activities of the morning were beginning. The milkman came jingling out of the cul-de-sac; lights were twinkling in upper rooms; hands were withdrawing curtains; in front of No. 10, the housemaid was already scrubbing the steps. Peter posted his policeman at the top of the street.

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"I don't want to make my first appearance with official accompaniment," he said. "Come along when I beckon. What, by the way, is the name of the agreeable gentleman in No. 12? I think he may be of some assistance to us."

"Mr. O'Halloran, sir."

The policeman looked at Peter expectantly. He seemed to have abandoned all initiative and to place implicit confidence in this hospitable and eccentric gentleman. Peter slouched down the street with his hands in his trousers pockets and his shabby hat pulled rakishly over his eyes. At No. 12 he paused and examined the windows. Those on the ground floor were open; the house was awake. He marched up the steps, took a brief glance through the flap of the letter-box, and rang the bell. A maid in a neat blue dress and white cap and apron opened the door.

"Good morning," said Peter, slightly raising the shabby hat; "is Mr. O'Halloran in?" He gave the *r* a soft continental roll. "Not the old gentleman. I mean young Mr. O'Halloran?"

"He's in," said the maid, doubtfully, "but he isn't up yet."

"Oh!" said Peter. "Well, it is a little early for a visit. But I desire to see him urgently. I am — there is a little trouble where I live. Could you entreat him — would you be so kind? I have walked all the way," he added, pathetically, and with perfect truth.

"Have you, sir?" said the maid. She added kindly, "You do look tired, sir, and that's a fact."

"It is nothing," said Peter. "It is only that I forgot to have any dinner. But if I can see Mr. O'Halloran it will be all right."

"You'd better come in, sir," said the maid. "I'll see if I can wake him." She conducted the exhausted stranger in and offered him a chair. "What name shall I say, sir?"

"Petrovinsky," said his lordship, hardily. As he had rather expected, neither the unusual name nor the unusual clothes of this unusually early visitor seemed to cause very much surprise. The maid left him in the tidy little paneled hall and went upstairs without so much as a glance at the umbrella stand.

Left to himself, Peter sat still, noticing that the hall was remarkably bare of furniture, and was lit by a single electric pendant almost immediately inside the front door. The letter-box was the usual wire-cage, the bottom of which had been carefully lined with brown paper. From the back of the house came a smell of frying bacon.

Presently there was the sound of somebody running downstairs. A young man appeared in a dressing-gown. He called out as he came: "Is that you, Stefan? Your name came up as Mr. Whiskey. Has Marfa run away again, or — What the hell? Who the devil are you, sir?"

"Wimsey," said Peter, mildly, "not Whiskey; Wimsey the policeman's friend. I just looked in to congratulate you on a mastery of the art of false perspective which I thought had

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perished with the ingenious Van Hoogstraaten, or at least with Grace and Lambelet."

"Oh!" said the young man. He had a pleasant countenance, with humorous eyes and ears pointed like a faun's. He laughed a little ruefully. "I suppose my beautiful murder is out. It was too good to last. Those bobbies! I hope to God they gave No. 14 a bad night. May I ask you how you come to be involved in the matter?"

"I," said Peter, "am the kind of person in whom distressed constables confide — I cannot imagine why. And when I had the picture of that sturdy blue-clad figure, led so persuasively by a Bohemian stranger and invited to peer through a hole, I was irresistibly transported in mind to the National Gallery. Many a time have I squinted sideways through those holes into the little black box, and admired that Dutch interior of many vistas painted so convincingly on the four flat sides of the box. How right you were to preserve your eloquent silence! Your Irish brogue would have given you away. The servants, I gather, were purposely kept out of sight."

"Tell me," said Mr. O'Halloran, seating himself sideways upon the hall table, "do you know by heart the occupation of every resident in this quarter of London? I do not paint under my own name."

"No," said Peter. "Like the good Dr. Watson, the constable could observe, though he could not reason from his observation; it was the smell of turpentine that betrayed you. I gather that at the time of his first call the apparatus was not far off."

"It was folded together and lying under the stairs," replied the painter. "It has since been removed to the studio. My father had only just had time to get it out of the way and hitch down the 'No. 13' from the fanlight before the police reinforcements arrived. He had not even time to put back this table I am sitting on; a brief search would have discovered it in the dining-room. My father is a remarkable sportsman; I cannot too highly recommend the presence of mind he displayed while I was haring round the houses and leaving him to hold the fort. It would have been so simple and so unenterprising to explain; but my father, being an Irishman, enjoys treading on the coat-tails of authority."

"I should like to meet your father. The only thing I do not thoroughly understand is the reason of this elaborate plot. Were you by any chance executing a burglary round the corner, and keeping the police in play while you did it?"

"I never thought of that," said the young man, with regret in his voice. "No. The bobby was not the predestined victim. He happened to be present at a full-dress rehearsal, and the joke was too good to be lost. The fact is, my uncle is Sir Lucius Preston, the R.A."

"Ah!" said Peter. "The light begins to break."

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"My own style of draftsmanship," pursued Mr. O'Halloran, "is modern. My uncle has on several occasions informed me that I draw like that only because I do not know how to draw. The idea was that he should be invited to dinner tomorrow and regaled with a story of the mysterious 'No. 13,' said to appear from time to time in this street and to be haunted by strange noises. Having thus detained him till close upon midnight, I should have set out to see him to the top of the street. As we went along, the cries would have broken out. I should have led him back ——"

"Nothing," said Peter, "could be clearer. After the preliminary shock he would have been forced to confess that your draftsmanship was a triumph of academic accuracy."

"I hope," said Mr. O'Halloran, "the performance may still go forward as originally intended." He looked at Peter, who replied:

"I hope so, indeed. I also hope that your uncle's heart is a strong one. But may I, in the meantime, signal to my unfortunate policeman and relieve his mind? He is in danger of losing his promotion, through a suspicion that he was drunk on duty."

"Good God!" said Mr. O'Halloran. "No — I don't want that to happen. Fetch him in."

The difficulty was to make P. C. Burt recognize in the daylight what he had seen by night through the letter-flap. Of the framework of painted canvas, with its forms and figures oddly foreshortened and distorted, he could make little. Only when the thing was set up and lighted in the curtained studio was he at length reluctantly convinced.

"It's wonderful," he said. "It's like Maskelyne and Devant. I wish the sergeant could a-seen it."

"Lure him down here tomorrow night," said Mr. O'Halloran. "Let him come as my uncle's bodyguard. You —" he turned to Peter — "you seem to have a way with policemen. Can't you inveigle the fellow along? Your impersonation of starving and disconsolate Bloomsbury is fully as convincing as mine. How about it?"

"I don't know," said Peter. "The costume gives me pain. Besides, is it kind to a poor policeman? I give you the R.A., but when it comes to the guardian of the law — Blast it all! I'm a family man, and I must have *some* sense of responsibility."

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A JOB FOR THE MACARONE

by DAMON RUNYON

WHEN THE LAST RACE MEETING of the winter season closes in Miami and it is time for one and all to move on to Maryland, I take a swivel at the weather reports one day and I observe that it is still down around freezing in those parts.

So thinks I to myself, I will remain in the sunny southland a while longer and continue enjoying the balmy breezes, and the ocean bathing, and all this and that, until the weather settles up yonder, and also until I acquire a blow stake, for at this time my bankroll is worn down to a nubbin and, in fact, I do not have enough ready to get myself as far as Jax, even by walking.

Well, while waiting around Miami, trying to think of some way of making a scratch, I spend my evenings in the Shark Fin Grill, which is a little scatter on Biscayne Boulevard near the docks, that is conducted by a friend of mine by the name of Chesty Charles.

He is called by this name because he has a chest like a tub and he walks with it stuck out in front of him, and the reason Charles keeps his chest out is because if he pulls it in, his stomach will take its place, only farther down, and Charles does not wish his stomach to show in this manner, as he likes to think he has a nice shape.

At the time I am speaking of, Chesty Charles is not as young as he used to be, and he wishes to go along very quiet and avoid undue excitement, but anybody can see that he is such a character as observes a few things in his time. In fact, anybody can see that he is such a character as is around and about no little and quite some before he settles down to conducting the Shark Fin Grill.

The reason Charles calls his place the Shark Fin Grill is because it sounds nice, although, of course, Charles does not really grill anything there, and, personally, I think the name is somewhat confusing to strangers.

In fact, one night a character with a beard, from Rumson, New Jersey, comes in and orders a grilled porterhouse; and when he learns he cannot get same, he lets out a chirp that Charles has no right to call his place a grill when he does not grill anything and claims that Charles is obtaining money under false pretenses.

It finally becomes necessary for Charles to tap him on the pimple with a beer mallet, and afterwards the constables come around, saying what is going on here, and what do you mean by tapping people with beer mallets, and the only way Charles can wiggle out of it is by stating that the character with the beard claims that Mae West has no sex appeal. So the con-

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stables go away saying Charles does quite right and one of them has half a mind to tap the character himself with something.

Well, anyway, one night I am in the Shark Fin Grill playing rummy with Charles and there is nobody else whatever in the joint, because by this time the quiet season is on in Miami and Charles's business thins out more than somewhat; and just as I beat Charles a pretty good score, who comes in but two characters in sport shirts, and one of them has that thing in his hand and he says to us like this:

"Reach," he says. "This is a stick-up. No beefs, now," he says.

Well, Chesty Charles and me raise our hands as high as possible, and, in fact, I am only sorry I cannot raise mine higher than possible, and Chesty Charles says: "No beefs," he says. "But," he says, "boys, you are on an awful bust. All you are liable to get around this drum is fleas. If there is any dough here I will be using it myself," Chesty says.

"Well," one of the characters says, "we will have a look at your damper, anyway. Maybe you overlook a few coarse notes here and there."

So one character keeps that thing pointed at Chesty Charles and me, and the other goes through the cash register, but, just as Charles says, there is nothing in it. Then the character comes over and gives Charles and me a fanning, but all he finds is eighty cents on Charles, and he seems inclined to be a little vexed at the scarcity of ready between us and he acts as if he is thinking of clouting us around some for our shortage, as these git-'em-up characters will sometimes do if they are vexed, when all of a sudden Charles looks at one of the characters and speaks as follows:

"Why," Chesty Charles says, "do my eyes deceive me, or do I behold The Macarone, out of Kansas City?"

"Why, yes," the character says. "Why, hello, Chesty," he says. "Meet my friend Willie," he says. "He is out of Kansas City, too. Why, I never expect to find you in such a joint as this, Chesty," he says. "Especially a joint where there is so little dough."

"Well," Chesty Charles says, "you ought to drop around when the season is on. Things are livelier then. But," he says, "sit down and let's have a talk. I am glad to see you, Mac," he says.

So they sit down and Chesty Charles puts out a bottle of Scotch and some glasses and we become quite sociable, to be sure, and presently The Macarone is explaining that Willie and him have been over in Havana all winter, working with a payoff mob out of Indianapolis, Indiana, that has a store there, but that business is rotten, and they are now en route north and just stop over in Miami to pick up a few dibs, if possible, for walk-about money.

The Macarone seems to be quite an interesting character in many respects and I can see that he and Charles know each other from several places. The Macarone is maybe around forty and he is tall and black-

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looking, but the character he calls Willie is younger and by no means gabby, and, in fact, he scarcely has a word to say. We sit there quite a while drinking Scotches and speaking of this and that, and finally Chesty Charles says to The Macarone:

"Mac," he says, "come to think of it, I may be able to drop something in your lap, at that. Only last night a character is in here with a right nice proposition, but," Chesty says, "it is not in my line, so it does not interest me."

"Chesty," The Macarone says, "any proposition that is not in your line must be a very unusual proposition indeed. Let me hear this one," he says.

"Well," Chesty says, "it is a trifle unusual, but," he says, "it seems quite sound, and I only regret that I cannot handle it in person. I am froze in here with this business and I do not feel free to engage in any outside enterprises. The character I refer to," he says, "is Mr. Cleeburn T. Box, who lives on a big estate over here on the bay front with his nephew. Mr. Cleeburn T. Box wishes to quit these earthly scenes," Chesty says. "He is sick and tired of living. His nerves are shot to pieces. He cannot eat. He is in tough shape.

"But," Chesty says, "he finds he does not have the nerve to push himself off. So he wishes to find some good reliable party to push him off, for which service he will pay five thousand dollars cash money. He will deposit the dough with me," Chesty says. "He realizes that I am quite trustworthy. It is a soft touch, Mac," he says. "Of course," he says, "I am entitled to the usual twenty-five per cent commission for finding the plant."

"Well," The Macarone says, "this Mr. Box must be quite an eccentric character. But," he says, "I can understand his reluctance about pushing himself off. Personally, I will not care to push myself off. However," he says, "the proposition seems to have complications. I hear it is against the law in Florida to push people off, even if they wish to be pushed."

"Well," Chesty says, "Mr. Box thinks of this too. His idea is that the party who is to do this service for him will slip into his house over on the bay front some night and push him off while he is asleep, so he will never know what happens to him. You understand, he wishes this matter to be as unexpected and painless as possible. Then," Chesty says, "the party can leave that thing with which he does the pushing on the premises and it will look as if Mr. Box does the pushing in person."

"What about a club?" The Macarone says. "Or maybe a shiv? That thing makes a lot of racket."

"Why," Chesty says, "how can you make a club or shiv look like anything but something illegal if you use them to push anybody? You need not be afraid of making a racket, because," he says, "no one lives within hearing distance of the joint, and Mr. Box will see that all his servants and everybody else are away from the place

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every night, once I give him the word the deal is on. He will place the dough at my disposal when he gets this word. Of course he does not wish to know what night it is to happen, but it must be some night soon after the transaction is agreed to."

"Well," The Macarone says, "this is one of the most interesting and unusual propositions ever presented to me. Personally," he says, "I do not see why Mr. Box does not get somebody to put something in his tea. Anybody will be glad to do him such a favor."

"He is afraid of suffering," Chesty Charles says. "He is one of the most nervous characters I ever encounter in my life. Look, Mac," he says, "this is a job that scarcely requires human intelligence. I have here a diagram that shows the layout of the joint."

And with this, Chesty Charles outs with a sheet of paper and spreads it out on the table, and begins explaining it to The Macarone with his finger.

"Now," he says, "this shows every door and window on the ground floor. Here is a wing of the house. Here is Mr. Cleeburn T. Box's room on the ground floor overlooking the bay. Here is a French window that is never locked," he says. "Here is his bed against the wall, not two steps from the window. Why," Chesty says, "it is as simple as ABC."

"Well," The Macarone says, "you are dead sure Mr. Box will not mind being pushed? Because, after all, I do not have any reason to push him on my own account, and I am doing my best at this time to lead a clean life and keep out of unpleasant situations."

"He will love it," Chesty says.

So The Macarone finally says he will give the matter his earnest consideration and will let Chesty Charles have his answer in a couple of days. Then we all have some more Scotches, and it is now past closing time, and The Macarone and Willie take their departure, and I say to Chesty like this:

"Chesty," I say, "all this sounds to me like a very strange proposition, and I do not believe anybody in this world is dumb enough to accept same."

"Well," Chesty says, "I always hear The Macarone is the dumbest character in the Middle West. Maybe he will wind up taking in the South, too," he says, and then Chesty laughs and we have another Scotch by ourselves before we leave.

Now, the next afternoon I am over on South Beach, taking a little dip in the ocean, and who do I run into engaged in the same pastime but The Macarone and Willie. There are also numerous other parties along the beach, splashing about in the water in their bathing suits or stretched out on the sand, and The Macarone speaks of Chesty Charles's proposition like this:

"It sounds all right," The Macarone says. "In fact," he says, "it sounds so all right that the only thing that bothers me is I cannot figure out why Chesty does not take it over one hundred per cent. But," he says, "I can see Chesty is getting old, and maybe he loses his

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nerve. Well," The Macarone says, "that is the way it always is with old folks. They lose their nerve."

Then The Macarone starts swimming toward a float pretty well out in the water, and what happens when he is about halfway to the float but he starts flapping around in the water no little, and it is plain to be seen that he is in some difficulty and seems about to drown. In fact, The Macarone issues loud cries for help, but, personally, I do not see where it is any of my put-in to help him, as he is just a chance acquaintance of mine and, furthermore, I cannot swim.

Well, it seems that Willie cannot swim either, and he is saying it is too bad that The Macarone has to go in such a fashion, and he is also saying he better go and get The Macarone's clothes before someone else thinks of it. But about this time a little Judy with about as much bathing suit on as will make a boxing glove for a mosquito jumps off the float and swims to The Macarone and seizes him by one ear and holds his head above the water until a lifeguard with hair on his chest gets out there and takes The Macarone off her hands.

Well, the lifeguard tows The Macarone ashore and rolls him over a barrel and gets enough water out of him to float the *Queen Mary*, and by and by The Macarone is as good as new, and he starts looking around for the little Judy who holds him up in the water.

"She almost pulls my ear out by the roots," The Macarone says. "But," he says, "I will forgive this torture because she saves my life. Who is she, and where is she?"

Well, the lifeguard, who turns out to be a character by the name of Dorgan, says she is Miss Mary Peering and that she works in the evening in a barbecue stand over on Fifth Street. Now nothing will do but we must go to the barbecue stand and find Miss Mary Peering, and there she is in a blue linen uniform and with a Southern accent, dealing hot dogs and hamburger sandwiches and one thing and another to the customers.

She is a pretty little Judy who is maybe nineteen years of age, and when The Macarone steps forward and thanks her for saving his life, she laughs and says it is nothing whatever, and at first The Macarone figures that this crack is by no means complimentary, and is disposed to chide her for same, especially when he gets to thinking about his ear. But he can see that the little Judy has no idea of getting out of line with him, and he becomes very friendly toward her.

We sit there quite a while with The Macarone talking to her between customers, and finally he asks her if she has a sweet pea anywhere in the background of her career, and at this she bursts into tears and almost drops an order of pork and beans.

"Yes," she says, "I am in love with a wonderful young character by the name of Lionel Box. He is a nephew of Mr. Cleeburn T. Box, and Mr. Cleeburn T. Box is greatly opposed to our friendship. Lionel wishes to

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marry me, but," she says, "Mr. Cleeburn T. Box is his guardian and says he will not hear of Lionel marrying beneath his station. Lionel will be very rich when he is of age, a year from now, and then he can do as he pleases, but just at present his Uncle Cleeburn keeps him from even seeing me. Oh," she says, "I am heartbroken."

"Where is this Lionel now?" The Macarone says.

"That is just it," Miss Mary Peering says. "He is home, sick with the grippe or some such, and his Uncle Cleeburn will not as much as let him answer the telephone. His Uncle Cleeburn acts awful crazy, if you ask me. But," she says, "just wait until Lionel is of age and we can be married. Then we will go so far away from his Uncle Cleeburn he can never catch up with us again."

Well, at this news The Macarone seems to become very thoughtful, and at first I think it is because he is disappointed to find Miss Mary Peering has a sweet pea in the background, but after a little more talk, he thanks her again for saving his life and pats her hand and tells her not to worry about anything, not even about what she does to his ear.

Then we go to the Shark Fin Grill and find Chesty Charles sitting out in front with his chair tilted up against the wall, and The Macarone says to him like this:

"Chesty," he says, "have the dough on call for me from now on. I will take care of this matter for Mr. Cleeburn T. Box. I study it over carefully," The Macarone says, "and I can see how I will render Mr. Box a service and at the same time do a new friend of mine a favor. In the meantime," The Macarone says, "you keep Willie here amused. It is a one-handed job, and I do not care to use him on it in any manner, shape or form. He is a nice character, but," The Macarone says, "he sometimes makes wrong moves. He is too handy with that thing to suit me. By the way, Chesty," he says, "what does Mr. Cleeburn T. Box look like?"

"Well," Chesty says, "he will be the only one you find in the room indicated on the diagram, so his looks do not make any difference, but," he says, "he is smooth-shaved and has thick black hair."

Now, several nights pass away, and every night I drop into the Shark Fin Grill to visit with Chesty Charles, but The Macarone does not show up but once, and this is to personally view the five thousand dollars that Charles now has in his safe, although Willie comes in now and then and sits around a while. But Willie is a most restless character, and he does not seem to be able to hold still more than a few minutes at a time, and he is always wandering around the city.

Finally, along toward four bells one morning, when Chesty Charles is getting ready to close the Shark Fin Grill, in walks The Macarone, and it is plain to be seen that he has something on his mind.

A couple of customers are still in

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the joint and The Macarone waits until they depart, and then he steps over to the bar, where Chesty Charles is working, and gazes at Chesty for quite a spell.

"Well?" Chesty says.

"Well, Chesty," The Macarone says, "I go to the home of your Mr. Cleeburn T. Box a little while ago. It is a nice place. A little more shrubbery than we like in Kansas City, but still a nice place. It must stand somebody maybe half a million. I follow your diagram, Chesty," he says. "I find the wing marked X and I make my way through plenty of cactus and Spanish bayonets, and I do not know what all else, and enter the house by way of an open French window.

"I find myself in a room in which there are no lights, but," The Macarone says, "as soon as my eyes become accustomed to the darkness, I can see that it is all just as the diagram shows. There is a bed within a few steps of the window, and there is a character asleep on the bed. He is snoring pretty good, too. In fact," The Macarone says, "he is snoring about as good as anybody I ever hear."

"All right," Chesty Charles says.

"Show me the dough again, Chesty," The Macarone says.

So Chesty goes to his safe and opens it and outs with a nice package of the soft and places it on the back bar where The Macarone can see it, and the sight of the money seems to please The Macarone no little.

"All right," Chesty says. "Then what?"

"Well, Chesty," The Macarone says, "there I am with that thing in my hand, and there is this character on the bed asleep, and there is no sound except his snoring and the wind in some palm trees outside. Chesty," he says, "are you ever in a strange house at night with the wind working on the palm trees outside?"

"No," Chesty says. "I do not care for palm trees."

"It is a lonesome sound," The Macarone says. "Well," he says, "I step over to the bed, and I can see by the outline of the character on the bed that he is sleeping on his back, which is a good thing, as it saves me the trouble of turning him over and maybe waking him up. You see, Chesty," he says, "I give this matter some scientific study beforehand. I figure that the right idea in this case is to push this character in such a manner that there can be no doubt that he pushed himself, so it must be done from in front, and from close up.

"Well," The Macarone says, "I wait right over this character on the bed until my eyes make out the outline of his face in the dark, and I put that thing down close to his nose, and just as I am about to give it to him, the moon comes out from behind a cloud over the bay and spills plenty of light through the open French window and over the character on the bed.

"And," The Macarone says, "I observe that this character on the bed is holding some object clasped to his breast, and that he has a large smile

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on his face, as if he is dreaming very pleasant dreams, indeed; and when I gently remove the object from his fingers, thinking it may be something of value to me, and hold it up to the light, what is it but a framed photograph of a young friend of mine by the name of Miss Mary Peering.

"But," The Macarone says, "I hope and trust that no one will ever relate to Miss Mary Peering the story of me finding this character asleep with her picture, and snoring, because," he says, "snoring is without doubt a great knock to romance.

"So," The Macarone says, "I come away as quietly as possible without disturbing the character on the bed, and here I am, Chesty, and there you are, and it comes to my mind that somebody tries to drop me in on a great piece of skulduggery."

And all of a sudden, The Macarone outs with that thing and jams the nozzle of it into Chesty Charles's chest, and says:

"Hand over that dough, Chesty," he says. "A nice thing you are trying to get a respectable character like me into, because you know very well it cannot be your Mr. Cleeburn T. Box on the bed in that room with Miss Mary Peering's photograph clasped to his breast and smiling so. Chesty," he says, "I fear you almost make a criminal of me, and for two cents I will give you a pushing for your own self, right here and now."

"Why, Mac," Chesty says, "you are a trifle hasty. If it is not Mr. Cleeburn T. Box in that bed, I cannot think who it can be, but," he says, "maybe some last-minute switch comes up in the occupant of the bed by accident. Maybe it is something Mr. Cleeburn T. Box will easily explain when I see him again. Why," Chesty says, "I cannot believe Mr. Cleeburn T. Box means any fraud in this matter. He seems to me to be a nice, honest character and very sincere in his wish to be pushed."

Then Chesty Charles goes on to state that if there is any fraud in this matter, he is also a victim of same, and he says he will surely speak harshly to Mr. Cleeburn T. Box about it the first time he gets a chance. In fact, Chesty Charles becomes quite indignant when he gets to thinking that maybe Mr. Cleeburn T. Box may be deceiving him, and finally The Macarone says:

"Well, all right," he says. "Maybe you are not in on anything, at that, and, in fact, I do not see what it is all about, anyway; but," he says, "it is my opinion that your Mr. Cleeburn T. Box is without doubt nothing but a great scalawag somewhere. Anyway, hand over the dough, Chesty," he says. "I am going to collect on my good intentions."

So Chesty Charles takes the package off the back bar and hands it over to The Macarone, and as The Macarone is disposing of it in his pants pocket, Chesty says to him like this: "But look, Mac," he says, "I am entitled to my twenty-five per cent for finding the plant, just the same."

Well, The Macarone seems to be

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thinking this over, and, personally, I figure there is much justice in what Chesty Charles says, and while The Macarone is thinking, there is a noise at the door of somebody coming in, and The Macarone hides that thing under his coat, though I notice he keeps his hand under there, too, until it turns out that the party coming in is nobody but Willie.

"Well," Willie says, "I have quite an interesting experience just now while I am taking a stroll away out on the Boulevard. It is right pretty out that way, to be sure," he says. "I meet a cop and get to talking to him about this and that, and while we are talking the cop says, 'Good evening, Mr. Box,' to a character who goes walking past.

"The cop says this character is Mr. Cleeburn T. Box," Willie says. "I say Mr. Box looks worried, and the cop says yes, his nephew is sick, and maybe he is worrying about him. But," Willie says, "the cop says, 'If I am Mr. Box, I will not be worrying about such a thing, because if the nephew dies before he comes of age, Mr. Box is the sole heir to his brother's estate of maybe ten million dollars, and the nephew is not yet of age.'

"'Well, cop,' I say," Willie says, "'are you sure this is Mr. Cleeburn T. Box?' and the cop says yes, he knows him for over ten years, and that he meets up with him every night on the Boulevard for the past week, just the same as tonight, because it seems Mr. Cleeburn T. Box takes to strolling that way quite some lately.

"So," Willie says, "I figure to save everybody a lot of bother, and I follow Mr. Cleeburn T. Box away out the Boulevard after I leave the cop, and when I get to a spot that seems nice and quiet and with nobody around, I step close enough for powder marks to show good and give it to Mr. Cleeburn T. Box between the eyes. Then," Willie says, "I leave that thing in his right hand, and if they do not say it is a clear case of him pushing himself when they find him, I will eat my hat."

"Willie," The Macarone says, "is your Mr. Cleeburn T. Box clean-shaved and does he have thick black hair?"

"Why, no," Willie says. "He has a big mouser on his upper lip and no hair whatsoever on his head."

Now, at this The Macarone turns to Chesty Charles, but by the time he is half-turned, Chesty is out the back door of the Shark Fin Grill and is taking it on the Jesse Owens up the street, and The Macarone seems greatly surprised and somewhat disappointed, and he says to me like this:

"Well," he says, "Willie and me cannot wait for Chesty to return, but," he says, "you can tell him for me that, under the circumstances, I am compelled to reject his request for twenty-five per cent for finding the plant. And," The Macarone says, "if ever you hear of the nephew of the late Mr. Cleeburn T. Box beefing about a missing photograph of Miss Mary Peering, you can tell him that it is in good hands."

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SATAN HAD ANOTHER NAME

by CHARLES B. CHILD

INSPECTOR CHAFIK OF THE CRIMINAL Investigation Department of the Iraqi police stepped from his car at the foot of the great mound of Tel-Herar on the plains of Mosul. He carefully corrected the angle of his *sidarah*, adjusted his neat polka-dot tie, and said in a dry voice to the police sergeant who accompanied him, "This is a very suitable background for a corpse."

It was a drab, flat land, arched by a vast sky, buttressed at one side by a range of gray hills. The shadows of clouds rolled in ghostly waves over the emptiness, and the voice of the wind was the keen of homeless gods for temples and worshipers long buried under the dust heap of history. The scene was repeated in Chafik's eyes, for they, too, were colorless and touched by passing shadows.

The mound which broke the monotony of the plain was artificial. Centuries of winds had heaped earth over the decomposing bones of a city so old that its very name was forgotten. Rain and sunshine had added a ragged cloak of grass and a few trees. Wandering tribes had built fortified villages on the heights, but each in turn had fallen — through war or neglect — and mingled with the earlier dust.

But Tel-Herar, normally the home of kite hawks and jackals, had been invaded by the pickaxes and shovels of the archeologists. No work, however, was going on at the moment, and the approaches to the camp were guarded by troopers of the *liwa* police.

"A brooding atmosphere," Chafik said, distastefully fingering his clothes, which were crumpled by the night journey from Baghdad. "It is of course to be expected, for there are many dead here. I trust you are not seeing ghosts, my dear Abdullah?"

The gaunt sergeant raised his hands in a shielding gesture. "May God the Compassionate defend me," he said, "but I have already heard the tramp of invisible armies —"

"Let them remain invisible. A ghost is not a fact, and as we of the police deal only in facts you would embarrass me by seeing Alexander the Greek marching against Darius the Persian." The Inspector bent to light a cigarette and hide a smile. "Furthermore," he added gravely, "we are concerned with the more recently dead, and unfortunately the corpse has the complication of foreign nationality."

Sergeant Abdullah replied, "Sir, to me a corpse has no nationality."

"Your reproof is justified," Chafik said. "But I am sure if a coolie had died here instead of a Swiss gentleman the investigation would have been

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left to the local police, and you and I would not be detached from the comforts of Baghdad."

The Inspector turned to greet a burly man hurrying down the path from the camp, whom he recognized as the district officer in charge of the investigation. They met with polite words, the curved fingers of their right hands hovering near their foreheads in graceful salaams, but Chafik did not fail to notice the compressed lips of his colleague, nor the fact that he shortened the ceremonious greetings by two phrases.

"I trust you will approve of my preliminary investigations," the officer said stiffly.

Chafik answered, "My dear Mr. Pashati, you are the representative of the governor. I am only a consultant from C.I.D. headquarters. Therefore, it is you who have the authority to approve or disapprove of what I do."

"Then I will give you the facts," Pashati said, glancing doubtfully at Sergeant Abdullah who was struggling with a cough. "As you have been informed, the dead man was Mr. Emile Burnand, a Swiss appointed by the Department of Antiquities to excavate Tel-Herar. He is said to have had a brilliant career —"

"A very brilliant one. Although a stranger to Iraq, he has written many books on our history. Young. Enthusiastic. He would have gone far."

"His assistant is Mr. Martin Gower —"

Inspector Chafik extracted a reference card from the filing cabinet of his brain. "English," he announced. "Born London, 1889. A resident of Iraq and a former curator of the Royal Museum. Conducted excavations at Hit, Sinjar, and also Ukhaider. Has a weakness for gin." He paused and then added, "As the desert thirsts for water, so does the English liver for gin."

Pashati said, "I see no connection between his liver and this case. Mr. Gower very properly ordered a search for his chief when he failed to return to the camp last night. The body was found on the slopes of Tel-Herar. Mr. Burnand had been shot. The bullet came from a pistol of .38 caliber and was fired at such close range that the skin of the forehead was marked by the discharge. Mr. Burnand's own weapon was still in its holster, so undoubtedly we deal with murder."

"We can also say he did not fear his assailant because he allowed him to approach so near."

"Obviously he knew him —"

"Probably, not obviously. We are on the borderline of theory and fact . . . Why did Mr. Burnand leave the camp?"

"He was looking for his dog. His body was lying within a few yards of it."

Chafik rolled an unlighted cigarette between finger and thumb. "You do not give motion to the animal. Therefore, I gather it was also dead."

Pashati said indifferently, "Its throat was cut."

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"Was it a savage dog?"

"I did not ask. It was a Kurdish mountain dog. As I see it, Mr. Burnand caught the man who killed his pet and during an argument the unknown drew a gun and shot him."

"If I carried a knife and a gun and wished to destroy a mountain dog, which has the fangs of a lion, I would use the gun," Chafik said. He shrugged. "What action has been taken?"

"I have searched the camp and collected all .38s. Unfortunately, they are common because many were stolen from the British troops during the war. I found three such weapons and sent them to Mosul together with the bullet extracted from the dead man, and I now await the report of the ballistics expert."

"Excellent! . . . I am in possession of all details?"

Pashati said, "I have covered the ground fully. You would not be interested in the thefts."

Chafik answered a little sharply, "I am interested in everything. What has been stolen?"

"The only important item was a relic unearthed during the excavations. Mr. Gower describes it as a plaque of lapis lazuli. It was stolen from Mr. Burnand's tent, and I had previously investigated this theft. The other losses were among the men and concern amulets and beads, the peculiarity being that all were of a blue color."

"That is indeed peculiar —"

"It means nothing to me. I only mention it because Mr. Gower pointed out the coincidence."

Chafik was silent. Shadows darkened his eyes and he turned his head and looked at the hills which bordered the plain. Behind them in faint outline, half-clouds and half-peaks, were the gigantic mountains of Kurdistan. "The color blue," said the little man in the involuntary voice of a sleepwalker, "has a certain significance in this part of the world." He opened a new packet of Ghazi cigarettes and offered one to his colleague.

"What was the name of the Swiss gentleman's dog?" he asked.

"The dog's name? Inspector Chafik, I do not understand you."

"Sometimes I fail to understand myself, so I do apologize," Chafik said. "And now with your permission —"

"You wish to see the body?"

"The corpse," said Chafik, bowing his sleek head in respect to the dead, "is an established fact. We seek that which is hidden. Let us therefore view the living."

They went to the tent of the dead man's assistant. Mr. Martin Gower sat at a table examining fragments of pottery from the ruins of Tel-Herar. He was a small, wiry man who made an attempt to hide his age behind the facade of a youthfully clipped mustache and a careful arrangement of his thinning hair. But his faded blue eyes and yellowish skin showed that the vampire sun of the Near East had emptied him of vitality.

As Chafik shook hands and felt the

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too-emphatic pressure of the Englishman's fingers, he thought: He is a husk animated by fear of the falling years — and was moved by pity to say, "Forgive me for disturbing your important work."

Gower pushed the pottery away. He said, "You don't disturb me. This is late second-century Sassanian stuff. Doesn't prove a thing."

"I am, of course, very ignorant." Inspector Chafik waved aside the glass of straight gin which the Englishman poured. "There is," he said, "a certain resemblance between your work and mine. We both seek facts and weave from them a picture of the past. But what you look for at Tel-Herar I do not know, Mr. Gower."

The man's faded eyes found sudden depth of color. He said with a rush of enthusiasm, "I'm looking for a dream. I believe we're going to solve the riddle of the Flood. Tel-Herar is one ruin on another, but somewhere at the bottom of it all, below the subperiod cities of Assyria, of the Kassites, below Sargon's days, below —" He stopped and swallowed the drink Chafik had refused. "Where have we met before?" he asked.

"We have not met before, sir."

"You've got a familiar face," Gower said. He frowned. "What was I talking about? Oh, my dreams. Well, I believe that at the bottom of this rubbish heap I'll find the ancestors of Noah."

The Inspector said in his precise English, "This is very exciting, but for myself I prefer to leave my ancestors buried." He gave an ingratiating smile. "We are too far in the past. Let us jump six thousand years to yesterday. Did you see Mr. Burnand leave the camp?"

Gower answered, "No. I was at the excavations sifting out stuff. The men were finished for the day but I was keen to carry on while there was still light. Burnand had gone back to make up his notes, but I heard him later calling for his dog. It had a habit of wandering."

"And the name of the dog?"

"Shaitan. Your name for Satan — and it fitted the savage brute. But it made me uneasy to hear Burnand shouting it. He went over the top of the mound and that was the last I saw of him alive. I didn't hear the shot."

The Englishman appeared to have something else to say, and Chafik, perched on the edge of a chair with his clasped hands resting on the table, said, "Mr. Gower, please be frank with me. You did not like to hear your chief shouting, 'Shaitan,' because of the curious thefts."

"Blast it, yes. The theft of things blue —"

"The color blue," went on Chafik, turning to the district officer who was impatiently drumming the table, "is worn by superstitious people to ward off evil. The Moslem and Christian tribesmen of the Mosul area are particularly fond of it. But there are others in these parts who hate it because they are confessed worshipers, not of God, but of Satan."

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Pashati said, "The Yezidis!" and added in a harsh voice, "May the Compassionate, the All-Merciful, destroy those children of evil."

Chafik replied with unexpected sternness, "God is indeed compassionate and merciful. Therefore, your request will not be granted."

"The Yezidis believe that Satan is Master of the world —"

"As the world is today I would find it difficult to convince them otherwise. They believe that Satan was made Master for ten thousand years, and they pay homage out of fear."

"Dogs and devil worshipers!" Pashati exclaimed. "Do they not hold sacrifices, and do not their priests receive the virgins, who —"

"The Yezidi rites are known only by hearsay, and to me hearsay is not proof," Chafik said.

Gower said, "You're right. I've been to their temple at Sheik-Adi as guest of the Mir, the Black Pope. I saw nothing disgusting. But it's true they consider the color blue accursed, and it's also true the name of Satan must not be mentioned in their presence. They've got another name. They call him Melek Taus." He reached for the bottle of gin. " 'Speak not my name nor mention my attributes, lest ye be guilty,' " he quoted. "That's from the *Khitab al Aswad*, the Devil's Bible. And the punishment for breaking the rule is death."

The only sound in the following silence was the scratch of Sergeant Abdullah's pencil moving over the pages of his notebook. When he had completed the record of the conversation he cleared his throat and said, "Sir, have I permission to speak?"

Chafik answered, "Do so, my dear Abdullah. You have a theory?"

"Sir," began the gaunt sergeant, "on the evidence of my notes it would appear there is a Yezidi in this camp. He stole the amulets and beads because they are inimical to his master, Satan. He destroyed the dog because it was named Satan. He killed Mr. Burnand because he spoke the forbidden name."

Chafik said, "The pattern begins well, and although the colors are daring they may blend. It is to be considered."

District Officer Pashati rose to his feet. "I approve of the theory," he announced. "Let us go and interrogate the men. Now that we have a direct line of action we can make swift progress."

"It is a principle of geometry," Chafik said, "that the shortest distance between two given points is a straight line. As a schoolboy I was constantly moving from A to B, but when I reached my destination I found there was no progress beyond it. Therefore, I formed the opinion that the greatly respected Euclid had a complex for creating frustration."

Pashati frowned. "This is not the time to discuss your schooldays. There is a Yezidi among the men. We will find this son of evil and deliver him

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rorthwith to the Pit of Pestilence."

He left the tent accompanied by Sergeant Abdullah. The Inspector, who had not moved, was studying the signet ring on the little finger of his left hand. A cigarette smoldered between his lips.

The clink of a bottle against a glass finally roused him. He looked at Gower who said awkwardly, "I forgot. There's a man missing from the camp. He vanished about the time Burnand was killed. The foreman told me."

"And the name of this man?"

"Nadir Terek."

Chafik said in a strangely hollow voice, "That is a mountain name. It fits the pattern, but the weave is ugly and I do not like it." He moved uncomfortably in his chair. "Forgive me, Mr. Gower. I was speaking my thoughts, a distressing habit which I cannot break. But now I have talked of weaving I see there is a thread which I have not untangled. What was stolen from Mr. Burnand's tent?"

"You mean the lapis lazuli plaque?" The Englishman shrugged. "I can't tell you much about it. Burnand had a habit of keeping his finds to himself, but as I was only his assistant I couldn't complain. The plaque was cut like an intaglio with the design of a head, and he was quite excited about it. Somebody stole it two days before he was killed, and he reported the matter to the police."

"Lapis lazuli is blue. The color becomes monotonous." Chafik stood up and salaamed and left the tent saying conversationally to the wind-swept plains, "It would all be possible if the dog had been shot, but the use of the knife spoils the pattern. . . ."

Refreshed by a night's sleep at the Mosul Station Hotel, the Inspector sat at breakfast in his comfortable air-conditioned room. He was dressed in pajamas of a striking pattern and color, but his sleek black hair was newly oiled and brushed, and his smooth chin was dusted with lavender talcum powder. The view from the window over a public park was pleasant, but the little man's eyes were still shrouded by the shadows of Tel-Herar, and the stubs of many cigarettes neatly arranged in the ash-tray showed that his mind was disturbed.

Presently Sergeant Abdullah made a hurried entrance, saluted, and said, "Sir, they have the Yezidi. I am obliged to report that Mr. Pashati has begun the interrogation without the courtesy of advising you."

"You are angry," Chafik said. "The humors created by anger poison the system and destroy clear thinking. Therefore, relax, my dear Abdullah, and let me pour you coffee. Who is the Yezidi?"

"Nadir Terek, the man who was missing from the camp —"

"He has confessed?"

"Sir, he does not admit he worships the Devil. He says he pays homage to Melek Taus."

Chafik translated into English, "The Peacock Angel." He went on in

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Arabic, "That is the same thing. Satan has another name among the Yezidis. Did he have a gun?"

Sergeant Abdullah answered, "There was only a knife. The district officer is very angry and is now trying to persuade him to tell where the gun is hidden."

Chafik grimaced. "I do not like this talk of persuasion, but he does deserve a little beating for killing the dog —"

"But," protested the sergeant, "the prisoner has not made that confession."

"Doubtless he has done so by this time. He will also confess to thefts at the camp. If you were superstitious and ignorant and found yourself among people who wore charms against your favorite deity, and so named their most savage dog, you would act the same way. I trust you are not letting a primitive fear of Satan's worshipers distort your approach to this case." The Inspector finished his coffee and, rising to his feet, said, "I will now dress."

They drove through the crowded streets, passing rows of coffee shops where men in colorful tribal dress lounged on divans spread with rugs. The overhanging balconies of the houses were gaily painted in the old Turkish style, and Chafik said, "We are too drab in Baghdad, but the smell of our city is not so offensive."

The car crossed the Tigris by a long iron bridge and stopped at police headquarters.

Pashati was in his office. He had removed his jacket and as he lounged back in his chair he had the satisfied air of a man resting from hard physical effort. He said casually, "I was about to telephone you, Inspector. We have the man and they are still interrogating." He nodded to a closed door through which filtered the sound of voices, a battery of hammers driving questions. "A stubborn dog," the district officer commented. "But he talks."

"What has he confessed?"

"He claims to be an honest man, but admits he hid his disgusting beliefs to get work at Tel-Herar. He dares to claim he was justified in stealing and destroying the amulets and beads because they were an insult to his profane Master, but he says he did not take the lapis lazuli plaque. And as for the dog —"

"He killed it because of its name."

"Shaitan!" Pashati spat. "Yes, that is his story. His shoulder was ripped by the animal's fangs, so up to that point he possibly tells the truth. But afterward —" The burly man shrugged. "Such fantastic lies, Inspector!"

"He denies killing Mr. Burnand?"

"He says that when he killed the dog, the Swiss arrived and shot at him as he ran away. With those words he condemns himself. Mr. Burnand's weapon was not fired. I myself took it from the dead man's holster and examined it."

Chafik sat primly on the edge of the chair, his dun-colored eyes darkened by dreams. He said in his sleep-

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walker's voice, "The threads are tangled. We must begin again."

"All we need is the gun with which this devil worshiper committed the crime. Eventually he will tell me where it is."

"What of the other guns?"

"I have the expert's report. None of them fired the shot." Pashati opened a drawer and placed three pistols on the desk; each was tagged.

"This one," he said, "belongs to Ali ibn Ali, foreman of workmen and a respectable man. This is Mr. Gower's. The third is the property of Michael Avanozian, interpreter. The foreman and the interpreter were both in camp at the time of the killing. I check everything," he added.

"The dead man did not carry a .38?"

"There was one in his holster, but as I told you, it had not been fired —"

Pashati stopped, seemingly alarmed by Chafik's expression. The Inspector's thin, high-cheekbone face had the likeness of a bronze mask drawn glowing from a flaming mold. Slowly the fires died, and with trembling hands the little man lighted a cigarette. He asked, "Where is this gun?"

"We have it here with the other personal effects."

"It is to be examined."

"But it was not fired! Surely, Inspector, you are not suggesting Burnand shot himself, cleaned the gun, reloaded it, and then replaced it in his holster?"

"It is to be examined." Chafik's voice was cold and harsh. He rose to his feet and went to the window with hands clasped before him in the first attitude of prayer. He said, "I have failed to take my own good advice, but there is a temporary relief in anger as in drink. But I may drink deeper next time —" The door closed as Pashati went out hurriedly.

Inspector Chafik remained at the window. The rising voices of the interrogators in the other room failed to rouse him, but when there was the sound of a blow the little man turned to Sergeant Abdullah who stood motionless near the door. "Tell them," Chafik said, "that the director of police frowns on such methods." He swung his arms slowly and with bowed head began the ritual of prayer.

When Pashati returned half an hour later, Chafik was sitting in a chair smoking a cigarette with the calm detachment of a man who has found peace. But the district officer was without peace. He dropped to his seat behind the desk, put a heavy gun before him, and said in a strangled voice, "This is incredible!"

Chafik said, "To call a thing incredible is often refusal to accept a fact. Your ballistics expert, of course, has reported that this gun fired the shot that killed Mr. Burnand."

"How did you guess?"

"I never guess. I weave my threads and when they make a symmetrical pattern, I know."

"But he could not have shot himself, cleaned the gun and —"

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Chafik stood up. He said, "Return Nadir Terek to prison. I suggest you rest, my dear Pashati — and a few grains of aspirin will do you no harm."

He left headquarters and entered his car. He said to Sergeant Abdullah, "Tel-Herar." A little later, as they were passing the shapeless earthen ramparts of Nineveh, the sergeant heard Chafik say with agony in his voice, "Oh, Compassionate and All-Merciful! Why am I made a judge of men?"

The great mound of Tel-Herar was a crouching monster under a sky hung with the yellow awning of a gathering dust storm. The hot, still air bristled with the lances of invisible insects, and as Chafik left the car and climbed the path to the camp on the southern slopes, he was moved by the unpleasantness of the day to remark, "Unless the climate has changed, the Children of Noah must have welcomed the Flood." He moistened his lips and felt the roughness of clinging dust. The taste, like his thoughts, was bitter.

Work had recommenced under Gower's supervision. The Englishman said, "Hullo, Inspector. You're just in time. We've found an interesting cuneiform inscription." He was stripped to slacks and undervest, and his faded eyes had a vague look.

"We, too, have made progress," Chafik said. "The man Terek has been taken. He confesses to being a Yezidi, to stealing the amulets, to killing the dog. But for the rest —"

"Let's go to my tent. I need a drink." Gower began to walk toward the camp. "So you don't share Pashati's theory."

"Mr. Gower, theories are always dangerous, and this one had a serious flaw. A man going to kill a savage dog would not risk a mauling by using a knife if he also carried a gun." The little Inspector paused. "My weaving was hindered by the faulty threads of superstition. But when I eliminated the unfortunate Yezidi I found that Satan did indeed have another name. This case is not all of one pattern. There are two designs."

They reached the tent. The Englishman poured himself a drink but did not touch it. He said, "I'm confused by this talk of weaving."

Chafik said, "I have also been confused. A fact was hidden from me by incomplete investigation. I looked for a missing gun, but when I heard that the gun in Mr. Burnand's belt was also a .38, I ended my search."

"But it wasn't fired! Pashati showed it to me himself. Burnand didn't —"

"Dead men do not run around like chickens with their heads removed," Chafik said. "Obviously, the killer, having shot your chief, cleaned the gun and put it in his victim's holster. An excellent place to hide it. There were four weapons of the same caliber in the camp and an accounting had to be made for each. The absence of one would have aroused the suspicions even of the district officer, who on his earlier mission here to inquire into the loss of the lapis lazuli plaque,

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had unfortunately given an impression of extreme stupidity."

"You haven't explained how the killer got hold of Burnand's gun."

"That is coming. Nadir Terek, who tangles our threads, also untangles them. He says he was shot at by Mr. Burnand. Somewhere out there," and Chafik waved toward the plain, "is the bullet that missed him. I may search for it. Even the haystack needle cannot hide in these days of inquisitive scientific instruments. And the ground is soft, so the bullet will be in good condition for the Department of Ballistics to process."

"What then?" The Englishman's voice was very weary.

"Pashati will have another headache. The experts will prove that the bullet came from a certain gun, but not the gun in Burnand's holster." Chafik put a hand over his eyes as if to hide the design he was weaving. Then he squared his shoulders and, slightly turning his head, began again, "There are two men in this camp whom we must consider. One is your foreman, Ali ibn Ali. The other is the interpreter —"

An exclamation came from Gower. He was looking at Chafik's profile outlined against the gray wall of the tent. His listless hands fumbled among the fragments of pottery and other relics of Tel-Herar scattered on the table.

The Inspector said, "Something surprises you, but not my words. You find my face odd? It reflects my thoughts . . . I mentioned the foreman and the interpreter because we must dispose of them before we proceed. Both men carried guns of .38 caliber, but both were in the camp at the time of the killing. Therefore, they are not part of this pattern."

He moved uncomfortably; the Englishman was still looking at him. Gower lowered his eyes finally and picked up a knife with a long, thin blade from the littered table. "Lovely steel," he said. "Must be late Abbasside period. Wonderful the way the sand preserved it from rust. Even the inscription is clear — '*Thibhahum bism er rassoul.*' "

Chafik translated, " 'In the name of the Prophet, kill.' " He lighted a cigarette.

"It's good steel," Gower said again. "I've put an edge to it . . . Inspector, were you trying tactfully to suggest that the bullet fired at Terek came from my gun?"

Chafik answered sadly, "No, sir. Not from your gun. That was the one you put in Mr. Burnand's belt after you shot him. Unfortunately, there is no registration of guns in Iraq, so you felt quite safe."

The rising wind blew dust against the tent; the rushing sound was infinitely sad. Gower, small and crumpled in the chair, said, "I think you must be a Yezidi. How I hate your diabolical weaving! D'you want me to confess?"

Chafik said, "Confession, like overindulgence, is often regretted the next day. But in your case it may help. I find the act of murder less

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tragic than the circumstances causing it. And you, Mr. Gower, are very tragic. You are fifty-eight years of age and have just awakened from a dream, like so many other men, to find yourself too old for the bright career you once planned. You also found yourself at Tel-Herar as assistant to a younger man who possibly was unsympathetic. And when he discovered the lapis lazuli plaque and kept it to himself —"

"That thing!" The Englishman put down the knife and took a flat box from his pocket and opened it. A three-inch square of deep, rich blue rested on a bed of cotton. Gower, with his eyes on it, went on, "The Lord knows what date this is. I think it's pre-Sumerian and possibly proves my theory about Tel-Herar. I stole it because Burnand wouldn't let me examine it, and I swear I intended to put it back. You see, when all your life you've had a certain theory and then somebody takes it —"

Chafik interrupted, "I am not without sympathy, but I am imprisoned behind the bars of an unpleasant duty. I beg you to be cautious."

"Nothing matters now," Gower said roughly. "This thing caused Burnand's death. When I heard him fire at the Yezidi I went up to see what had happened. He was so upset over the loss of his dog that he turned on me and accused me of stealing the plaque. Oh, he knew! He said he was going to expose me, and then I —"

The Inspector said hastily, "And then possibly, Mr. Gower, there is a blank in your mind. You found him dead. You cleaned the guns and changed them. What better place to hide your weapon than the dead man's holster when you expected such a person as Pashati to investigate? Oh, yes, Mr. Gower, that is your confession! . . . And now there remains one little detail. Why, when we first met, did you think you had seen me before?"

The Englishman pushed the lapis lazuli plaque across the table. Deeply cut into the stone was the outline of a head, a portrait from a remote past.

"You'll need a mirror," Gower said. "Line for line, feature for feature, it's you!" He smiled. "You told me once you preferred your ancestors to remain buried, and how right you were! If Burnand hadn't found this picture of your ancestor you wouldn't be sitting here weaving your infernal threads into a rope for my neck —"

His voice rose hysterically and the Inspector, looking up, saw madness in the faded eyes. The Englishman reached for the killing knife.

The little man's left hand moved smoothly to carry the cigarette from his lips and press the burning stub into the hollow between Gower's clenched thumb and forefinger. There was a cry of pain, and as Chafik took the knife from the relaxed grip he said in his most gentle voice, "I do apologize, but please let us dispense with dramatics. And furthermore, Mr. Gower, I have no desire as yet to join my distinguished ancestor!"

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Here is the amusing and amazing story of a murder trial, its antecedent action and its aftermath, written by a man who at the age of seventeen was a sheriff's deputy in one of the sagebrush counties of Eastern Oregon — so he ought to know what he's talking about, in spades! H. L. Davis's first book, HONEY IN THE HORN, *was the Harper Prize Novel for 1935 and won the Pulitzer Prize the following year. His latest novel,* WINDS OF MORNING, *was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection earlier this year.*

MURDER STORY

by H. L. DAVIS

THE COLUMBIA RIVER WHEAT-town where I grew up was a quarter-section of close-grouped board houses on a naked rocky hillside that sloped, treeless and without vegetation enough to show through the dust, down to the big warehouse-dock where sternwheel steamboats snubbed in to load grain for the deep-water ports downstream.

It was not much on looks, being short on color and long on bucksaw architecture; but it had the name, which the townspeople did their best to keep for it, of being the quietest, most up-to-date, and most business-like shipping-center on the entire river. Even its red-light houses locked their pianos and squelched all upper-register conversation after eleven at night, and any stray wheat-hauler who shot at the municipal fire-bell, or took the brakes off a loose freight-wagon to see it roll, went to the cooler with galloping promptness.

This anti-sportiveness platform was all right for the townspeople, who had regular work to do and regular hours to keep; but it didn't set so well with visiting sheep-tenders and river-hands, for their jobs kept them so far from unnecessary disturbance that they got homesick for it. Generally, they stayed in town a day and then moved down on the beach outside the city limits, where a perpetual drift of transient harvesters, deck-hands, hoboes, fish-Indians, scow-boaters, gamblers, and denatured-alcohol peddlers ran frivolity so high that they averaged three fights a night, a couple of shootings a month, and about the same level of earnest devotion to honest commerce that one would find in a nest of half-grown bobcats.

The beach-camp limit was within yelling-distance of town, but the townspeople never paid any attention to the grist of stabbings, gougings, whisker-pullings, and homicides that went on below them until one sum-

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mer, when a slabwood scow-boss named Abe Lightner got hauled in for killing a river-hustler and had his defense taken up, as part of a civic-patriotism movement, by a raw, splintery young sawmill-town down-river which claimed him as an inhabitant. Then, though the court-room was stuffy, the heat ferocious, and the case itself not much different from a dozen other beach-shootings that had gone totally unnoticed, the whole wheat-town population knocked off work to watch the trial and make sure the jury didn't get dazzled by outside talent into turning Lightner loose.

No such feverish interest in a court case had ever been shown before in that country. Business stopped, freight piled up on the dock, the red-light houses lifted their embargo on late arguments because all their customers insisted on threshing out points of law and evidence, and the court-room foundations sagged two feet under the weight of citizens who jammed and steamed in it from ten in the morning till twelve at night for days.

Not a lick of their feeling was personal. They didn't care whether the river-boomers killed one another or not, and they knew nothing about Lightner except that he looked simple, bothered nobody, and seemed totally harmless and useless. He wasn't even a member of any radical political party, not having been around enough to find out that there were such things. In brief, there was nothing about him and nothing about what he had done that the wheat-town really wanted him hanged for. They wanted him hanged simply because the sawmill-town wanted him let off.

The case got started, without anybody caring much about it, by a river-flat farmer who stamped into the wheat-town sheriff's office where I worked, dragging with him a tousle-headed hobo with a scratched face and a restive expression. He introduced himself by remarking that we were certainly keeping the country law-abiding, and then ordered the hobo to tell his story and be sure he told it right. The hobo took a chair, wiggled himself comfortable, and sailed in.

He and his partner, he explained, had been laid off at the down-river sawmill, and they had accepted the offer of a ride to the harvest-country from a big scow-punk named Abe, who was heading upstream with a load of slabs. They rode along, helping with the steering-sweep which weighed a ton and with the sail which weighed ten, until they raised some sand-flats a few miles below town, and the scow-punk announced that they would tie up and row in to a farm where they could buy something to drink. It was pretty near dark, and there was no sign of any farm ashore; but the scow-punk looked too simple to lie, and they did need a drink powerfully, so the three of them piled into the rowboat and started after one.

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The scow-punk did the rowing, with the two partners ahead in the bow. When the boat rubbed ground, he dropped the oars, yanked a gun, said something about wanting money, and shot the man next to him. The other hobo took a poke at him with the boat-hook, and then jumped out and ran like blazes, and the scow-punk, after a couple of shots after him, climbed out and chased him. The hobo hid in sand-holes and briar-patches, and ran again until, so tired that the seat of his pants dragged his tracks, he found a farmhouse, explained about himself, and got a bed for the night. It would have suited him all right if rural hospitality had ended there, but the farmer refused to let him go without telling his sufferings to the authorities. Now that he had done it, he would like to go on about his business.

The farmer's corroboration was tepid, but trustworthy so far as it went. He guaranteed nothing about his guest's story except that it jibed with the one he had told at the farmhouse. He did know that there had been some shooting on the river about dark, and that, driving into town, he had almost run over a dead man on the beach close to the main mail-road. He had nothing to say about our inability to keep these beach-hustlers from getting killed, but he did think it neglectful to leave them lying in the road where they would scare farm-kids on the way to school. He left, and the hobo remarked again that he would like to leave too.

It was wasteful not to let him. The case could mean nothing to the taxpayers, and following it up was certain to cost them considerable money. And yet, the dead man had to be got rid of, and we couldn't do it by merely digging a hole and rolling him into it. He had to be turned over to the coroner, who would hand a verdict of homicide to the district attorney. Then the case would go to the justice court, back to the grand jury, and, finally, to the circuit court. Every one of these steps would mean expense, and not one of them could be legally avoided. So the sheriff locked the hobo in jail as a material witness, sent a wagon after the dead river-hustler, and shipped the rest of his force down-river to herd in a scow-punk named Abe.

Herding him was not difficult. The sawmill had a record of slabwood consigned on a scow belonging to Abraham Lightner, who lived on a beach-homestead below the sawmill-town and could be reached by telephone. We called, and his wife answered right up. Her husband had just got in, and, though he had told her nothing, she judged by his looks that he had been up to something underhanded. She offered, in case she found out what it was, to call us up and split with us, which was more than neighborly, considering that she had no notion whom she was talking to.

She meant it, though, for she started right in on him before the receiver was hung up, and, though it took us two hours getting from town

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to his homestead, she was still flaxing him with accusations when we pulled in. She was a plumpish woman with pink cheeks and a pleasant expression which didn't alter, no matter how mad she got. The only way of telling when she was in a temper was by her voice, which sounded like some kind of machine for sharpening tacks.

Her husband was a big, sulky-looking man, with a combined knot-headedness and sensitiveness that only life on a one-man river-scow could have kept so long in the world. He probably felt fairly comfortable at his work, because the job of pulling a steering-sweep didn't require him to know the alphabet, or who was President, or how to tell time, or where the Atlantic Ocean was. With people around, it was harder. He couldn't acquire the commonest scrap of learning, because his mind simply hadn't been chambered for it; but he could feel touchy about his ignorance, and he did, almost to the point of insanity.

His one way of concealing it when cornered was to clamp his mouth shut, look sullen, and let on that he was too insulted to answer questions. His wife yanked him and called him a betrayer, not worth the shoe-track of the man she had divorced to marry him, and he humped his shoulders and looked dark. We explained what we had come for, and he pulled away from her, got his hat, and went out and climbed in the wagon.

His hurt silence was impressive, as if he was saving up something to spring on us that would make us look plumb idiotic. But he never sprung it, and his bashful dread of exposing his ignorance stalled business in two good-sized towns for a month, upset their politics for good, cost the wheat-county taxpayers at least $10,000 in trial-expenses and twice that in worn-out nerves, and got Lightner himself shipped off to the penitentiary to hang for a crime he hadn't committed and hadn't even been tried for.

The district attorney in our town was a sort of string-tie politician by nature, with a good resonant voice, a bold flow of flavorless language, and an ambition to get into Congress by the time he was fifty. It was nervy of him, for, in that great Western land of opportunity, fifty was considered as much too young for a congressman as fifteen was for a bartender. But he worked at it, joining lodges, lecturing grange-picnics, and flogging big hunks of oratory into delinquent high-school boys and back-door saloonkeepers as if they had knifed the Muse of Civilization right in the brisket. He didn't want to prosecute Lightner, because a river-tramp shooting wouldn't furnish him any campaign-material; but he couldn't very well duck the coroner's verdict of homicide, so he hustled through the preliminaries, got his indictment, had an old land-office lawyer appointed to conduct some kind of defense, and sat back to work on other cases that his constituents could really take an interest in.

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He didn't sit back long. The old land-office lawyer couldn't get anything out of Lightner, and he decided to rummage the sawmill-town for a few character-witnesses to make a showing. His rummaging stirred up curiosity, Mrs. Lightner added to it by telling around how her husband had disgraced her, and the news got, only two days before the trial, to the one man in the country who saw what a real double-geared career-builder the case could be made into.

This was a wispy little tramp-lawyer who had set up in the sawmill-town without money, connections, prospects, or anything except a carnivorous determination to land himself a respectable job with a steady income, no matter how many hamstrings he busted doing it. He hadn't been in the place long, but he was smart enough — or hungry enough — to see the Lightner trial as his chance with the public, and to pick out the one issue in it that was bound to fetch them. He got his statement into the sawmill-paper in the morning, and by night everybody in town was laying for him on his way home to see what such a high-principled man looked like.

The statement wasn't high literature, but it certainly was a wicked brand of strategy. Whether Lightner was guilty or not, it began, was none of the writer's concern. What did matter, and what ought to matter to every civic-minded sawmill-towner, was that one of themselves — a neighbor, with whom, no doubt, many of them had worked shoulder to shoulder on the slab-dump — was fighting for his life in a lonely, far-off jail, among strangers who cared nothing about him except to get his case cleared off the docket and be done with it.

That sort of treatment would do well enough for a man from some fifth-rate cow-wallow in the desert; but Lightner belonged to a community of a different sort, and it was time outsiders were finding out what the difference was. They needed to be shown that a man from the sawmill-town was to be treated like a man, no matter where he went or how friendless he appeared, and that he was not to be shotgunned through a hurry-up hanging-mill like a cocklebur horse in a loading-chute. As for himself, the lawyer wound up, he was leaving on the morning boat for the wheat-town to donate his services, free, voluntarily, and for nothing, to Lightner's defense. Expensive it might be, but he would do it if it broke him.

Nobody in the sawmill-town would have donated a dime to keep Lightner from being hanged; but the place was new, slightly wildcattish, and extremely touchy about its standing among older communities, and the little lawyer had pulled exactly the right tap. Before the day was out, he had a contributed defense-fund of nearly $1000, he had shut Mrs. Lightner up and started her packing to rush to her husband's side, and he had collected a squad of twenty reliable

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witnesses who were prepared, for a two-weeks' vacation with all expenses guaranteed, to make oath that Lightner was a kind husband, and industrious slab-piler, and a man who had never killed or tried to kill anybody in all the years they had known him. He also brought in Mrs. Lightner's divorced husband, a stoop-shouldered little pack-boat owner.

The wheat-town was soothing along in its usual pre-harvest calm when the little lawyer herded his picnicky rollickers off the boat, and, if he had paraded the whole bunch through the middle of town stark naked, the effect couldn't have been more thunderous or annoying. The expedition had been intended to establish the fact that the sawmill-town was important, but it was taken as a pointed intimation that the wheat-town was unable, without help, to give an unknown prisoner a fair trial.

Everybody felt mad about it, and the district attorney felt the maddest, because he was the worst scared. He had no grudge against Lightner, but he couldn't afford, after a twenty-year buildup with his constituents, to have his own courtroom mobbed and his own jury taken away from him by an unknown shyster from a boom-time sawdust-pile. He spent half the night coaching the hobo in his testimony, and the rest of it organizing his case to show that Lightner had operated his scow for years with the idea that it might come in handy to murder somebody on.

He worked fast, frantically, and tolerably well, but most of his labor went to waste, for the sawmill-lawyer had also failed to make Lightner talk, and had been obliged to switch his defense. He had intended to present Lightner as a solid, land-holding citizen, dragged from his business and placed in jeopardy of his neck on the unsupported word of a stray hobo. But it would have been ridiculous to preach about the outraged respectability of a man who refused to do anything except sulk and stare at his feet. A new line was necessary, and it had to meet a tough set of requirements.

There had to be frequent boosts for the sawmill-town's loyalty, neighborliness, and civic unity; some kind of court appearance had to be worked in for all the twenty-odd witnesses; and the whole case had to be kept plausible, dignified, and respectable. The little lawyer could think of only one move that filled the bill. That was to concede everything the State claimed, and then to prove that the sawmill-town had always regarded Lightner with pitying compassion because he was insane.

It was a ticklish case to risk a man's neck on before a country jury, but there were advantages. Being new, it would be sensational; being unexpected, it would probably make the district attorney look like a hay-baler and the opposing counsel, by natural contrast, like a brainy man. So the little lawyer ordered his witnesses to start recollecting times when Lightner had acted strange, persuaded Mrs.

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Lightner to sell her husband's scow for extraordinary expenses, and sent to San Francisco for a registered psychiatrist at $100 a day and found.

He didn't go near Lightner, and he didn't even look over his jury list. The case was already all over the country, and whatever kind of defense he put up was certain to get him talked about. Win or lose, he was over the hump.

The district attorney had no such comfortable prospect in front of him, but he didn't dare lose, because it would knock his whole future smack in the head.

He prepared his case with the carefulness of desperation. Every hole in the evidence was patched, every particle of it was squeezed to the last drop of meanness. When Lightner looked troubled over being called so many long words, it was pointed out that he felt sorry because he hadn't killed two men instead of one; and when he looked indifferent, he got denounced for not caring a toot how many he killed. Mrs. Lightner would have been a much better defendant, for she cried, screamed, and had to be held down by her divorced husband, who still looked worried. The other defense witnesses were much less uneasy and much less polite about it, and the townspeople resented their jubilant snickering behind their hands too deeply to care whether Mrs. Lightner felt bad or not.

The opening for the defense was the biggest event the country had seen since the Bannock Indians jumped the reservation. The sawmill-town ran a special boat excursion to take it in, and the courtroom and the streets outside were so packed that the judge, jury, prisoner, witnesses, and lawyers had to be butted through behind a flying-wedge of special deputies. The temperature was 112 in the courtroom, and the little lawyer had his face clawed and his best clothes ruined; but nothing stopped him. His examination of sanity witnesses lasted eight days, and proved, to the entertainment of the sawmill-town rooting-section and the disapproval of everybody else, that Lightner's queerness had ranged all the way from eating raw beefsteak to wearing his pants hindside-to.

All the witnesses enjoyed their public appearance hugely, and, when they were all through and the district attorney had frayed himself into a palsy yelling at them, the little lawyer called the psychiatrist to the stand, packed all the testimony of both sides into the legal shenanigan known as a hypothetical question, and fed it to them all over again. It took four days to read, it included everything that had appeared in evidence and a lot that hadn't, and it ended with the inquiry whether, in the psychiatrist's opinion, a man who had done all that could be in his right mind.

The psychiatrist, who had made several hundred dollars by sitting in a chair and smirking at women in the crowd, said no, and the district attorney was so outraged at hearing his own evidence read back at him by the

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opposing side that he totally forgot to ask if insanity was a characteristic of a man who, though illiterate, had accumulated a wife, a wood-scowing business, and a half-section of farm-land with house, barn, livestock, outbuildings, and a piped water-supply. He yelled, insulted the psychiatrist, and made a speech about his unsullied record of public service, and the defense rested.

The district attorney's closing argument lasted two days and nights. At times he was so hoarse he couldn't be heard, and at others he got frantic and yelled so loud as to stop the milk-yield of dairy cattle clear on the other side of town. He proved that Lightner was a master criminal and the dead river-hustler a kindly, fun-loving man who had been wantonly slaughtered and brutally dumped on a desolate beachroad to lie exposed to the night air, dead, unsheltered, and alone. It was a seat-jarring piece of eloquence, and people who wouldn't have given the hustler a night's lodging in the family haymow felt so bad about his post-mortem roofless-ness that they could hardly hold still.

The little lawyer's summing-up was less tearful and more snippy. It was not the custom in civilized countries, he remarked, to hold an insane man responsible for his acts, however brutal the narrow-minded voice of backwater intolerance might make them out to be. The jurors were there to judge, not a crime, but a man accused of a crime. They must try to overcome their backward notions, and think of his case as one for charity, not vengeance. They must take a look at all his friends and neighbors, who had left their work and their pleasant homes to say a good word for him, and at Mrs. Lightner, fighting gallantly by his side, sustained by the esteem of the entire sawmill-town population, which knew, if other towns didn't, how to make allowances for human weaknesses. The sawmill rooting-section almost broke through the floor cheering him when he got through, and the jury, having stayed out ten hours to show people that they understood the importance of the case, brought in a verdict of first-degree murder.

They could hardly have done anything else, after all the kinds of hayseedism that the little lawyer had hinted against them, but the district attorney was so prostrated by relief that he had to be helped from the courtroom. The effect on Lightner was less spectacular. He simply stood up when the judge told him to, and sat down again when the sheriff yanked his coat-tail. The little lawyer was equally unfeazed, and, having given notice of appeal, he helped Mrs. Lightner's divorced husband lead her out into the air as if he were rescuing her from the main corral at an auction of uneducated mules.

The sawmill delegation was as high-spirited as if their side had won, and they almost started a riot by ganging outside the courtroom and crowning each juror with a bunch of hay as he emerged. The courtroom deputies

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marched them down to the boat, and they left carrying with them an announcement from the little lawyer that, though work on the appeal would detain him for a few days, he intended to run in the Fall election for district attorney, and he hoped the sawmill-town realized, as the more backward communities did not, the advantage of electing a man with a known record for humanity, up-to-dateness, and loyalty to his constituents.

The Lightner appeal didn't get very far. The little lawyer's preparation for it consisted of trying to persuade Mrs. Lightner to sell her husband's land for extraordinary expenses. She refused, so he went home to electioneer, and we heard no more of the case until Lightner was brought back from the State penitentiary to be sentenced.

It was a lonesome ceremony, for this time there was no courtroom audience at all. Everybody knew it was going on, because the newspaper had announced it, but nobody came. Mrs. Lightner wasn't there, because she was closing up her ranch to go back to her first husband. The only lawyer present was the old land-office attorney, still sticking because the county was paying him $50 as public-defender fees, and he felt bound to do something to earn it. Besides him, there were the judge, the court clerk, a guard from the sheriff's office, and Lightner himself.

The penitentiary had changed Lightner almost beyond recognition. It wasn't usual in those times to think of a State's prison as a manhood-builder, particularly when the man was in it to be hanged; but it was one place where people didn't expect him to know things he couldn't learn or understand things he couldn't get through his head. The novelty of being out-and-out ignorant without throwing his hearers into a convulsion had given him real dignity. To help out, he had something to say, he knew that he was going to be allowed to say it without coaching or interruption, and he had a whole courtroom all to himself to say it in. When the judge invited him to go ahead, he stood up and went straight at it.

"It's too late for me to go clear, and I know it," he told the judge. "I don't care about that, because there's nothing for me to go back to. But this is the first chance I've had to talk without somebody pickin' on me from one side and somebody tellin' me what to say from the other, and I'm goin' to take it. I don't kill people for fun like one of them lawyers said, and I ain't crazy like the other one said. I'm goin' to tell you what happened the night that hustler got killed, and if you don't believe me you can all go plumb to the devil."

He told them. That he told the truth, nobody who heard him could doubt. He had no talent for invention, and his story fitted all the facts as no made-up yarn could have done. He hadn't invited the two hoboes aboard his scow as the State claimed

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— they had invited themselves. He had let them on because he couldn't think of an excuse not to, and they had brought along a two-gallon demijohn of system-building tonic, which they finished between them in two days.

Then they whooped, fought, stripped naked, and did calisthenics on the rigging, and talked seriously about turning the scow into a pirate ship and making steamboat passengers walk the plank, until he got scared and decided to set them ashore. The only way he could do it was to promise them whiskey at a farm; but when the boat grounded with no farm in sight, they got suspicious, ordered him to row back to the scow, and jumped him. He shot one, let off a couple more shots to make the other one run, and pulled back to his scow.

That was all. He didn't like to kill people, and he hadn't intended to rob them. Why should he, when he knew that neither of them had the price of a two-dollar ticket up-river on the steamboat?

"They told me at the pen that I ort to told this at the trial," he said. "When did I git a chance to? Some of them lawyers was for me and some was against me, but they'd all come down to the jail and tell me they was my friends, and how did I know who lied and who didn't? Nobody would have believed me anyhow, and I don't care. I've lost my scow and my business and my land and my wife. . . ."

He sat down. It seemed odd that the loss of his wife should have represented the culmination of all tragedy to him, for he obviously didn't get much comfort out of having her around. Probably she was a kind of title to respectability, like land and an established business. It wasn't every man like him who could manage to get a wife.

The judge, after a minute or two, remarked that he hoped everybody, including the prisoner, understood that the penalty in this case was fixed by law, and that he could neither alter it nor evade the duty of pronouncing it. The new evidence was scarcely enough to order a retrial on, since on paper it amounted merely to a statement by the prisoner that he hadn't done what they had cinched him for doing. But, if anybody could afford time and funds to bring the case before the State Pardoning Board, he would willingly put his name to a recommendation for lenity. Meantime —

It was a good deal like offering to write his autograph on the courthouse ceiling, if somebody would kindly turn the building wrongside up for a few minutes so he could get at it conveniently. The old land-office lawyer explained that he had tried to interest pro-Lightner men in getting the hanging called off, but that since the trial he hadn't been able to find any. If Lightner had been a New Thoughter, or a Day-of-Doomist, or something, he might have managed to raise some kind of backing for himself. Unfortunately, he wasn't anything except a

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talking-point in the district attorney's campaign for Congress, and only one of a list of convictions in that. He went out of the courtroom and back to the penitentiary to be hanged, leaving us, as I had felt from the first he would, feeling like a bunch of idiots.

Even the courtroom retainers had him when, a year later, he walked in and shook hands all round. He was back at scowing slabwood again, and he had got pardoned. It was on account, he explained, of his wife.

"Not on account of any work she done," he said. "My wife don't mix into this court business, and no decent woman ort to. But she went back to live with her first husband, and he couldn't git along with her. So he put up money and hired lawyers and got me pardoned out for her to come back to. They got me loose the week I was to be hung, and I bought my scow back on time the week after."

He took our congratulations with dignified relish, for he had been scowing slabwood into the wheat-town for three months without any of the townspeople even recognizing him. Congratulations hardly seemed enough, considering what the poor cuss had been through. It was hair-curling to hear him talk easily about getting let off, and to realize how close he had come, simply through not amounting to anything, to not getting let off at all. One would have expected his knees to bat together whenever he thought of it, and, instead, he looked better and sassier than we had ever seen him. The penitentiary had helped his confidence, of course, but what helped more was his discovery of a special gift that put him, not merely even with other people, but away to hellangone out past them.

"There's mighty few men that's got the practice and character to git along with that wife of mine," he told us. "Mighty few men besides me could do it, and it took a thing like this to make people find it out."

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THE CASE OF THE FAKED ALIBI

by AUSTIN RIPLEY

PROFESSOR FORDNEY WAS IN AN expansive mood.

"I've often observed," he told his dinner guests, "how extremely difficult it is to take an unassisted alibi. The recent Werner affair in Chicago is a case in point." He lit a cigar and continued: "I had no suspicion of Werner when I bumped into him on Michigan Avenue the morning after a friend of his had been found murdered. When I casually inquired where he'd been between 4 and 6 o'clock the previous afternoon, he gave the following account.

" 'It was such a glorious afternoon that about 2 o'clock I went for a sail. When I was about eight miles offshore — about 5:30 — the wind died down completely. There wasn't a breath of air. Drifting about I recalled that the International distress signal is a flag flown upside-down and at half-mast. So I ran mine up to the middle of the mast in that manner and waited in the dead calm.

" 'Shortly after 6 o'clock the freighter *Luella* hove to and I went aboard her after securing my boat with a tow-line. Her skipper said he'd seen my distress signal about three miles away. He put me ashore at Harvey's Landing and a passing car gave me a lift to town. Imagine my surprise when I read in the morning paper that the *Luella* had sunk in a storm last night and all hands had been lost!' "

The Professor sipped his wine and went on:

"While the *Luella* had been sunk with loss of entire crew, I immediately arrested Werner for further questioning. I knew his alibi was faked."

How did the Professor know? You will find the solution at the bottom of the page, printed upside-down.

In a dead calm Werner's flag would have hung limp against the mast and the *Luella's* captain could not possibly have seen at such distance whether or not it was upside-down.

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EQMM's DETECTIVE DIRECTORY

edited by ROBERT P. MILLS

BLACK SHEEP, RUN *by BART SPICER* (DODD, MEAD, $2.50)	". . . exciting and satisfactory . . . as human and even tender as it is hard and tough." (AB)	". . . fair specimen of relentless eventfulness . . . excitement depends at last from a very dubious thread . . ." (JS)
COPY FOR CRIME *by CAROL CARNAC* (CRIME CLUB, $2.50)	"All quiet, solid and exceedingly satisfactory." (AB)	"This is the ingratiatingly peopled sort of tale one expects from Carol Carnac . . ." (JS)
THE MAN IN THE MIST *by FRANCIS BONNAMY* (DUELL, SLOAN AND PEARCE, $2.50)	"For a spy melodrama, the story is . . . a bit slow . . . but Detective Peter Shane is in fine form . . ." (AB)	". . . a very doughy enterprise . . . Shane . . . exhibits little more than insouciance and a few Holmesian mannerisms . . ." (JS)
SKELETONS AND CUPBOARDS *by RALPH ARNOLD* (MACMILLAN, $2.50)	". . . a satisfactory standard British package." (AB)	". . . diverting . . . Easy to take except on technicalities." (JS)
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THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE *by GEORGE HARMON COXE* (KNOPF, $2.50)	". . . pretty standard stuff, but handled . . . with high professional skill." (AB)	". . . prettily arranged ethical and romantic dilemma . . . workmanlike." (JS)
KILL AND TELL *by HOWARD RIGSBY* (MORROW, $2.50)	"The case . . . is an unusually good one . . . soundly constructed . . ." (AB)	". . . a somewhat untidy arrangement in violence and hearts-ease." (JS)
PAGODA *by JAMES ATLEE PHILLIPS* (MACMILLAN, $2.75)	"Hardness unalloyed by any element of humanity . . . coldly uninteresting . . . objectively skillful." (AB)	". . . fierce, abrupt, fragmentary, highly cinematic little thriller . . ." (JS)

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Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine rounds up the judgment of reviewers across the country. The key on the right gives sources.

". . . getting closer to the conventional . . . but narration is still far above average." (LGO)	"Conscientious handling of plot and people . . . spirited performance . . . Nice job." (SC)	
". . . agreeably unsensational . . . plenty going on but few exclamation points." (LGO)	"Credibility of characters and sureness of handling . . . mildly involved solution." (SC)	
". . . explanation's too wordy, but general plot structure and scenery are good. C plus." (LGO)	"Local angle well and interestingly handled; action rather fitsy-starty. Middling." (SC)	*KEY TO REVIEW SOURCES* AB: *Anthony Boucher in The New York Times* FC: *Frances Crane in The Evansville Press* SC: *Sergeant Cuff in The Saturday Review of Literature* LGO: *Lenore Glen Offord in The San Francisco Chronicle* JS: *James Sandoe in The New York Herald Tribune*
". . . plot . . . slight but works out fairly enough . . . mild comedy is in the best British vein." (LGO)	". . . highly readable sly humor, not a fast tale but . . . satisfactory . . ." (FC)	
"The writing's pleasant and the people are fairly real . . . B minus." (LGO)	"Involvements of hero's private life tend to retard pace. Slowish." (SC)	
". . . some sound deduction described in Mr. Coxe's quiet and genuine style." (LGO)	"Slow starter . . . speedometer needle picks up. Average." (SC)	
". . . Wilde's struggle with honor, love and mystery is plausible and interesting." (LGO)	"Easy to read. Lots of love." (FC)	
"A man's book. The love story is not too convincing but it's not very important . . . Recommended." (FC)	"Background unusual and well handled; treatment lively and knowledgeable. Smooth job." (SC)	

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Do you ever have an irresistible impulse to go backward in time, back to your earlier reading, and reread the detective stories that thrilled you a generation or more ago? Back to small-type, pulp-paper dime novels, perhaps? Or to a dimly remembered book by, say, Anna Katharine Green? Or relive an adventure of the Thinking Machine or the one and only Arsène Lupin? Or chuckle again at the wiles and stratagems of O. Henry's Gentle Grafter? Or rediscover a "forgotten classic" like Cleveland Moffett's THROUGH THE WALL? *Or follow the trail once more of Professor Craig Kennedy or Dr. Fu-Manchu or The Lone Wolf? Or recall the past in crumbling, yellowed back issues of "Flynn's" or "Detective Fiction Weekly"?*

Well, here's your chance to obey that impulse. Here's a chance to dip (and we use the word advisedly) into a copy of "Detective Story Magazine" of more than twenty years ago, and read about one of DSM's most famous series characters — Thubway Tham, the lisping little pickpocket of Baghdad-on-the-Hudson. Oh, nostalgia! — or to paraphrase Swinburne, dead and gone, the tales we read together . . .

THUBWAY THAM'S WONDERFUL DAY

by JOHNSTON McCULLEY

BREAKFAST, THAT DAY, PLEASED Thubway Tham to a superlative degree. The little pickpocket ate about ten o'clock, after a restful night. His hot cakes were a delicious brown, the scrambled eggs were tasty, the bacon crisp, and the coffee no less than nectar fit for the gods.

Leaving the restaurant, Thubway Tham made his way leisurely, as usual, toward Madison Square, with his heart singing and his eyes twinkling, and with the idea that the world was not half so bad a place in which to dwell as it might be.

But experience told Thubway Tham that, because of these very things, he should keep his weather eye open for squalls. Generally, when a day started thus propitiously, there was grief due before nightfall.

Yet the day continued to be pleasant. Arriving at the Square, Tham found that his favorite bench was unoccupied, and quickly sat down upon it. The passing throng seemed to be a happy and contented one, and was much to his liking. The feeding pigeons and sparrows were chattering and fighting as usual. The fountain

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splashed through a myriad of sunbeams.

Thubway Tham felt himself glowing, expanding. He rolled and lighted a cigarette and leaned back comfortably on the bench. This was almost too good to be true. He wished that Detective Craddock of headquarters, his ancient friend-enemy, would put in his appearance, so that they might indulge in repartee. And even this wish was granted at once.

Detective Craddock, chewing upon his inevitable unlighted cigar, came swinging along the walk with more than his customary vigor. He beheld Thubway Tham and stopped.

"Hello, oldtimer!" said he.

"Hello yourthelf!" Tham replied. "What theemth to be the matter?"

"Nothing, Tham, nothing whatever. Why do you ask?"

"Becauth you were walkin' tho fatht," Tham answered. "I thought that maybe you wath goin' to a fire or thomethin' like that. Or maybe you are hot on thome trail, Craddock."

"Merely on my way to do a little investigating," Detective Craddock said. "No particular rush."

"There never ith any particular ruth where you are contherned," Tham informed him. "Your middle name ith not thpeed by any meanth — ethpethially when you are goin' to work."

"So?" Craddock said. He did not even flush and get angry, and Tham was quick to notice this phenomenon. "A little soured on the world today, aren't you, Tham?"

"No, thir! I wath jutht thayin' to mythelf a thhort time ago that thith ith a gloriouth day."

"It is at that!" Craddock affirmed.

"I thuppoth that you are goin' to pethter me today ath uthual," Tham said. "I thuppoth you will follow me around like thome hungry dog after a bone, and thee where I go."

"Nothing like it, Tham!" Craddock said. "I have a little investigation to do, as I remarked. My time is too valuable today to spend it trailing you."

"If it ith that valuable, you'd better cath it in before the bottom dropth out of the market," Tham retorted. "Your time wath thellin' for leth than nothin' the latht I heard."

"So?" Craddock actually grinned. Surely, Tham decided, this was a wonderful and peculiar day. Perhaps it was a rare day such as would not come again for ages — a day with everything absolutely all right!

"Well, I'll be on my way," the detective said.

Thubway Tham almost gasped his surprise. "You — you mean that you are goin' right along about your buthineth and not thtop here to bother and pethter me for an hour or tho?" he questioned.

"Even so, Tham."

"And you ain't goin' to quarrel with me about nothin', or athk me if I am goin' into the thubway today?"

"Nope!"

"Craddock, you mutht have a fever!" Tham suggested.

"Nothing like it, Tham!" Crad-

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dock declared. "Sorry that I can't play with you today, old boy, but we'll have our little chat some other time." He smiled at Tham once more, a sort of benevolent smile, then hurried on down the walk.

Thubway Tham turned and watched Detective Craddock out of sight. He saw the detective catch an uptown bus. Tham scratched at his head just above the left ear, as he always did when he was puzzled, and then decided that the affair was not worth troubling about. He turned once more to the contemplation of the fountain, the pigeons, and the passing throng.

For an instant, he was of the opinion that Craddock had been playing some sort of a trick, was trying to catch Tham off guard. Yet Tham had a "hunch" — and he always heeded what he called a "hunch" — that nothing of the sort was in the air. Craddock was going about some particular business, and Tham need not fear him for the remainder of this almost-too-wonderful day.

Tham decided that he would await the proper hour, and then enter the subway and attempt to purloin a wallet.

He yawned and glanced along the walk again, and so observed the approach of a gentleman who seemed to be out of his usual surroundings. Tham blinked his eyes and looked again. He never had seen quite this type before, except on the stage.

The man who approached was large — almost huge. He wore a hat that would have passed unnoticed in the Middle West; it spoke of wheat fields and horses and cows. He seemed to radiate prosperity. There was something refreshingly breezy about him.

"They all come to the big town thooner or later," Tham mused.

And then he almost gasped again, for the stranger was approaching the bench. Tham's eyes narrowed a bit at that. His perfect day was about to be marred, he thought, for Tham loved to occupy that bench by himself.

But it was a public bench and in a public park, and Tham had no right to order any man away. However, he could ignore the other.

But Thubway Tham found soon that he could do nothing of the sort. The breezy gentleman sat down beside him, sighed, looked this way and that, and finally scrutinized Tham.

"Beg pardon," he said, "but do you know much about this town?"

Tham turned and regarded him. "You mean New York?" he asked.

"I do, my friend. Are you well acquainted with the city?"

"Yeth, I may thay that I am," Tham responded. "Do you want to know how to get thome plathe?"

The breezy gentleman leaned back on the bench, cocked his wide-brimmed hat to one side of his head, inserted a cigar between his lips, and crossed his legs.

"I want to know how to get every place!" he announced. "My name's Saul Sutter. I'm from Sunny Corners, South Dakota."

The breezy gentleman looked straight

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at Tham as he made this announcement. It was as though he expected Tham to stare in awe.

"Tho?" Tham said.

"I'm the man who cleaned up on wheat," said Mr. Sutter. "Biggest crop the state ever saw! Made my pile this season, all right! Nothing but money! Bachelor, too! So what did I do?"

"I path," Tham told him. "What did you do?"

"I came to New York!" Mr. Sutter slapped his knee with an open hand and the resounding whack made the pigeons fly away and the sparrows chatter. "I came right to headquarters to see what it's all about!"

"To thee what what ith all about?" asked the bewildered Tham.

"New York!" announced Mr. Sutter. "I've heard about New York all my life. Always told myself that I'd come and see the village as soon as I had a pile big enough to see it right. Well, I've got the pile!"

Mr. Saul Sutter, of Sunny Corners, South Dakota, at this juncture pulled from his hip pocket a wallet about three inches thick. It was stuffed with currency. Mr. Sutter slapped the wallet against his fat leg.

"Got the price!" he repeated. "And I want to see this danged town from cellar to garret. Understand? Now you listen to me, my lad! I'm wise to the old bunk! I don't want to see the things they show hicks on these so-called sightseeing trips. I want to see the real town! The real New York! Some folks hate it and other folks love it, and I want to know which gang is right! I want New York to do her stuff, so I can decide."

"It — it ith a great town!" Tham said. He spoke from the depths of his heart. Thubway Tham loved his New York. It remained a wonderful day! Here was a gentleman from the wild and wide West to whom he could orate to his heart's content about his beloved town.

"Of course," said Mr. Saul Sutter, of Sunny Corners, South Dakota, "I want to see the usual things, too."

"What, for inthstance?"

"Oh, George Washington Bridge, Grant's Tomb, Central Park. I just got in last night, and prowled right over here. This is Madison Square, isn't it? Thanks — thought so! Now you listen to me, my lad! You're sitting here on a bench, and I know what that means. Oh, I've read plenty of stories about it! It means that you're out of a job! Maybe broke!" This time he slapped Tham's knee.

"Oh, I've got a few dollarth left," Tham told him.

"But you'd like to make a few more, eh?" asked Mr. Saul Sutter. "All right! I can pay fair wages!" He flourished the well-filled wallet again.

"Pardon me," said Tham, "but nobody but a thimp would flath money around like that in thith man'th town! My goodneth! Thome thneak thief might ——"

"Will get my money?" asked Mr. Sutter. "Don't kid yourself, my lad! I'm too wise to buy gold bricks, and I know that Central Park belongs to

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the town and isn't for sale. And I'm not exactly a weakling — not exactly! However, we'll stow it away!" He returned the wallet to his pocket, only this time it was an outside coat pocket, which had no flap. Tham was visibly nervous. He licked his lips.

"If you want to thee New York, you want to thee the thubway," Tham told him, hope bubbling in his breast.

"I can see that any time," Mr. Sutter replied. "I want to see other things first. Tell you what I'll do — you be my guide for the rest of the day. I'll pay all expenses and give you ten bucks for wages. You show me New York! Show me whether it's a town to love!"

Thubway Tham straightened his shoulders.

"Thir, I am one of thothe who love thith town," Tham told him. "I want other folkth to love it, too. I am doing nothin' today, tho to thpeak. I'll be glad to ethcort you around the thity and thhow you the pointh of intereth."

"That's the lad! Ten dollars ——"

Tham made a gesture. "Not a thent!" he declared. "I am not thittin' on thith bench becauth I am broke and out of a job. I — I jutht ain't workin' today. I'll thhow you the thity — but not a thent wageth! You jutht pay the expentheth."

"You're a man after my own heart!" said Mr. Sutter.

"We'll take a buth ride firth," said Tham. "Then we'll go other platheth. And after that I'll thhow you the thubway. I love the thubway! It ith one of the betht thingth in town, tho we'll thave it for the latht."

No longer did Thubway Tham doubt. This, indeed, was a wonderful day! It would be a day to remember! He would send Mr. Sutter back to Sunny Corners, South Dakota, a walking, breathing, talking booster for New York City! Perhaps, in days to come, he would meet Mr. Sutter again, and would learn that Mr. Sutter had disposed of his western acreage and his wheat and had settled down in New York.

Without much difficulty, they got on a bus and took seats on the top. Up Fifth Avenue the bus went, and Tham, speaking in whispers because of an attack of self-consciousness, began to instruct Mr. Sutter.

The throngs, of course, attracted the westerner. The gay shoppers intrigued him. Tham's heart glowed. If Mr. Sutter liked this, what would he say when he beheld some of the real sights of the city?

And presently: "Thith ith Columbuth Thircle," Tham said. "And that ith the Columbuth monument."

"Didn't know the old boy was buried here!" Mr. Sutter said.

"He ith not."

"Oh, I see! They put that statue there to show where he wasn't buried — that it? Ought to have statues for people who are really buried here. Plenty of dead ones around, seems to me!"

That was the first fly on the sheet

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of tanglefoot, but Tham discounted it. The bus rumbled on.

"There ith Thentral Park," said Tham.

"My gosh! So that is Central Park!" gasped Mr. Sutter. "I've heard a lot about that."

"There are a lot of thingths in it," Tham pointed out. "There ith Cleopatra's Needle ——"

"Never knew the old girl was a seamstress!" Mr. Sutter said. "Wish we had her in Sunny Corners! There isn't a good dressmaker for miles."

"It ain't that kind of a needle," Tham managed to say. "It ith an obelithk from Egypt. Ith wath tranthported here at great expenthe."

"I suppose they call it a needle so ——" said Mr. Sutter.

"Tho what?" asked Tham.

"So — joke!" Mr. Sutter explained.

"Tho!" said Tham, gulping. "Let uth get off thith buth and take a taxi."

They got off the bus and engaged a taxi. Tham explained that they could cover more ground that way. They drove through the Park first.

"Want to thee the zoo?" Tham asked.

"Nope! Nothing to compare with the West!" declared the tourist. "I've seen all those animals in their wild state."

"Lionth and elephanth?"

"Seen worse than that in the old days. Don't really care for animals."

"How ith thith for a park?"

"Fair!" Mr. Sutter admitted. "Fair, I may say. Of course, you couldn't very well have a regular park in a big city like this. Boy, out where I come from, there are natural parks where it takes a good horse a day to travel from the main entrance to the first peanut stand.

Tham smiled weakly. "We'll go over to Riverthide Drive," he said.

"Sure! Heard a lot about that!"

They went along the Drive. Tham pointed out spots of interest, but Mr. Sutter's enthusiasm was lukewarm. Tham extended himself, but to no avail. And Tham grew worried. He wanted the breezy gentleman from South Dakota to love the town.

"And here ith Grant'th Tomb!" Tham announced, after a time.

"Buried in it?" Mr. Sutter asked.

"Yeth, thir!"

"Well, that's proper," the gentleman from South Dakota declared. "Some tomb!"

"It ith a great work!" Tham said.

"It is!" Mr. Sutter agreed. "And a great man lies buried there! My old dad fought under him. They'd have done a lot better, though, to have made that tomb out of South Dakota rock. We've got some dandy rock."

"Any particular plathe now?" Tham asked.

"I want to ride on the elevated," Mr. Sutter told him.

Thubway Tham gasped in horror. "There ith nothin' to thee there," he declared. "If you want to take a ride, let uth uthe the thubway."

"The elevated first!" Mr. Sutter said, stubbornly. "Then we'll go to see the Statue of Liberty."

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At the proper corner they dismissed the taxi and ascended the steps to the elevated station. Thubway Tham sniffed. But he would see the thing through, he told himself.

They were compelled to stand. Mr. Sutter amused himself swinging from a strap and watching out a window. His coat pocket bulged, and the top of the currency-stuffed wallet could be seen plainly. Tham licked his lips again. But he did not attempt to "lift the leather" right now. In a way, Mr. Sutter was his guest and the guest of the city, too. Tham wanted him to be favorably impressed.

Tham lurched to one side with the motion of the train. Mr. Sutter's back was toward him. An inconspicuous little man swung between Mr. Sutter and Tham.

With half a sneer upon his lips, Thubway Tham watched this inconspicuous little man. He knew the type very well — and his methods. He bent as close as possible, and watched.

The little man glanced around, and Tham looked away, and looked back quickly. It was as he had expected. The right hand of the little man made a lightning move, as the train lurched again and caused the passengers to lurch also.

Tham gripped the little man by the arm. "Put it back!" he commanded. "Back quick, you ath! That man ith mine!" And he made a certain little motion, as one dip to another — and the little man put the wallet back into Mr. Sutter's coat pocket — rather ungraciously, it is true, but he put it back. Also, he got off at the next stop.

"Mithter Thutter, from Thunny Cornerth, Thouth Dakota, ith goin' to lothe hith wallet if he doeth not take better care of it," Tham told himself. "But nobody ith goin' to get it while I am along — unleth I dethide to get it mythelf!"

After a time they got off the train, descended to the ground, and walked across to the Battery. Tham unconsciously quickened his pace. Suddenly he turned Mr. Sutter halfway around, and pointed.

"There thhe ith!" he pronounced. "There ith the old girl! That, thir, ith the famouth Thtatue of Liberty!"

Mr. Sutter stared.

"Only one on earth like her!" Tham orated.

Mr. Sutter merely shrugged.

Inwardly, Thubway Tham boiled. This, indeed, was too much. But one thing remained — the subway! There was something which would surely impress Mr. Saul Sutter, of Sunny Corners, South Dakota!

Tham led the way to the nearest subway entrance with hope singing in his breast. His beloved subway!

They descended and passed through the turnstiles. A train roared into the station, and they got aboard. Once more, they were compelled to stand.

"Well, what do you think of thith?" Tham asked, his face glowing. "Nothin' in all the world like thith!"

"I should say not!" Mr. Sutter agreed.

"Thome bore!" said Tham.

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"You've said it!" Mr. Sutter declared. "Some bore is right! It'd bore me to death if I had to ride in this thing many times. I'd rather sit on the hurricane deck of a horse and ride where I can see something!"

Treason! Thubway Tham's face turned white, for here was a time when his emotion simply would not be controlled. In a manner of speaking, Tham saw red. This Mr. Saul Sutter from South Dakota had put himself beyond the pale! Whatever happened to him now could not be half-bad enough.

Mr. Sutter lurched from side to side, swinging from a metal strap. His pocket was half-open. Beneath Tham's nose was that wallet stuffed with currency.

"The thimp!" Tham told himself. "Jutht for that, I'll nip hith roll! I'll lift hith leather! I hope he hath to walk all the way home to Thunny Cornerth, Thouth Dakota!"

Mr. Sutter was paying no attention to Tham. He had his eyes on one of the doors and evidently was hoping that it would open soon and allow him to escape. Tham reached a determination. After all, it surely was a wonderful day — or it would be as soon as Tham had that wallet!

He would get it, he decided, when the train roared into Pennsylvania station. Then he would depart quickly, and Mr. Sutter would see him no more.

Tham started to glance around to make sure that he could accomplish his work without detection. And the darkness suddenly descended upon him. Ten feet away, swinging from a strap, though not looking in his direction at the very moment, was Detective Craddock!

Tham's heart almost ceased beating. Suppose in his anger he had lifted that leather and Craddock had seen him? A vision of the big prison up the river flashed through Tham's mind.

But he remained determined. He would get that wallet and repay Mr. Sutter for his slighting remarks about New York. And no Detective Craddock could stop him.

At that moment the detective turned and saw him, and grinned, and made his way to Tham's side.

"At it again, old timer?" Craddock asked.

"I do not underthtand you, Mithter Craddock," Tham told him.

"Any time that I see you in the subway, Tham ——"

"I have a perfect right to ride in thith thubway any day I want to," Tham said, with dignity. "If you have anything to thay about it ——"

Mr. Sutter turned and looked them over.

"This man bothering you, my lad?" he asked Tham. He glared at Craddock and appeared to be on the verge of tearing him to pieces. "If he is," he continued, "you speak right out, and I'll attend to him."

"And who are you?" Craddock demanded.

"I'm Saul Sutter, of Sunny Corners, South Dakota!" came the reply. "This gentleman had been showing

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me some of the alleged sights of this town at my request. Anybody who bothers him has to answer to me!"

"Easy, friend!" Craddock interrupted. "I happen to be a detective."

"I don't care if you're the sheriff!" Sutter told him.

"You're in bad company——" Craddock began.

"I am since you showed up!" Mr. Sutter declared.

Detective Craddock's face grew red. Tham was laughing inwardly, and Craddock knew it. He glared at Tham, and he glared at Sutter.

"Only one thing keeps me from taking you in for investigation," Craddock told Sutter, "and that is that the man with you always works alone. Otherwise, I'd think you were a dip also."

"A dip?" Sutter questioned.

"You probably do not know it, but this man is the cleverest pickpocket in town."

Mr. Sutter laughed. "Then there are a lot of poor pickpockets in town!" he declared. "He's had a chance to steal my wallet a thousand times, and he hasn't done it. He's been showing me the town, I tell you! Here's the old dough bag — see?" Mr. Sutter exhibited the wallet.

In turn, Detective Craddock exhibited his badge. "Take my advice," he said, "and be more careful with that roll. You're a walking invitation to every dip in town! This man may have been showing you the city, but he probably has planned to nip your wallet as he leaves you."

The train stopped at Pennsylvania station as Craddock ceased speaking, and Craddock got off it. Tham, half-stunned by it all, rode on with Mr. Sutter to Times Square.

They got off the train and ascended to Broadway.

"Walk along with me a block or so, sir," said Mr. Sutter.

Tham did so mechanically, still half-stunned at having been exposed to Mr. Sutter as a pickpocket. Sutter had sided with him against Craddock, so Tham had almost forgiven the South Dakotan's jeers at New York.

"Was that officer telling the truth?" Sutter demanded. "Are you a dip?"

"I — I thuppoth tho," Tham gulped.

"Well, I'll be danged!" Mr. Sutter exploded. "This is the best laugh I've had for an age! Me running around with a dip! Did you have an eye on my wallet?"

"I didn't take it, did I?" Tham said.

"No. You were trying to show me the town! And you sure did. Why?"

"Becauth I love this town!" Tham declared, honestly. "And I thought maybe I could make you love it, altho."

"I do! Oh, boy, I do!" Mr. Sutter exclaimed. "Into this side street, please. Now listen carefully, my lad! And watch your uncle!" Mr. Sutter reached into his other coat pocket and extracted a huge sheaf of currency. "See that?" he asked. He reached into a hip pocket and took out more. "And that? Profits of the day!"

"What do you mean?" Tham asked.

"Why, I'm a dip myself! I'm from

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San Francisco, not South Dakota. And I did want somebody to show me the town, so I could study it quick. I've nipped four wallets since you've been with me."

"What?" Tham gasped.

"I sure did! I got one on the bus, and I touched the taxicab driver for his, and I nipped one on the elevated, and one from a stuffy old gent in the Battery. This coin is the proceeds. And you get half, my lad — you get half! Partners and we didn't know it. And that detective said you always work alone! You take this share, my lad!" Mr. Sutter stuffed a handful of currency into one of Tham's pockets. "My eye! What that detective would do if he knew!"

They looked at each other, and grinned.

"Some close escape!" Mr. Sutter exclaimed.

"And you let me tell you thomethin'," Tham said. "There wath a dip on the elevated, and he got that wallet of yourth, and I gave him the high thign and thaid that I'd theen you firtht, and made him put it back!"

Mr. Saul Sutter stared at Tham for an instant, and then laughed once more, this time with gusto.

"My hat!" he said, tears streaming down his cheeks. "That wallet is a bluff, my lad — all stage money! Boy, I was down to about ten bucks when I met you in Madison Square. That's why I wanted to get into action quick. Oh, my hat!"

Tham grinned again. "Well, I mutht be goin' along," he said.

"You'll go along with me — to dinner!" declared Mr. Sutter. "Plenty of real money to buy it with, too. That subway looks good to me. Great place to work."

"Thay!" Tham gasped out. "The thubway ith my work ground, and don't you forget it!"

"Maybe so, but it'll be mine, too!" Mr. Sutter declared. "I'm from San Francisco, I said. I make my own rules and regulations, my lad. No New York dip tells me where I can work and where I can't! So that's settled! Coming to dinner?"

"No, thir!" Tham replied. "I — I've got another date. I'll thee you again thometime!"

"All right, boy! Look me up at my hotel!"

Mr. Sutter grinned and extended his hand, and Thubway Tham clasped it. Tham even smiled again. He even went so far as to step aside and brush against Mr. Sutter, to allow a couple of other gentlemen to pass them on the walk.

Then he turned away and hurried along the street, being careful to dart quickly around the nearest corner.

"Tho!" Tham said. "He ith goin' to work in the thubway, and he maketh hith own ruleth and regulationth, doeth he? Huh! The thimp! You look in your coat pocket, Mithter Thaul Thutter of Thunny Cornerth and Than Franthithco! Look and thee what you'll find! You'll not find thothe billth, Mithter Thutter, becauthe they are in my pocket now! Oh, itth a wonderful day!"

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A most curious "swindle" story by one of the world's masters in the fine art of double-talk and deception . . .

MY FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ARTEMUS WARD

by MARK TWAIN

I HAD NEVER SEEN HIM BEFORE. HE brought letters of introduction from mutual friends in San Francisco, and by invitation I breakfasted with him. It was almost religion, there in the silver mines, to precede such a meal with cocktails. Artemus, with the true cosmopolitan instinct, always deferred to the customs of the country he was in, and so he ordered three of those abominations. Hingston was present. I said I would rather not drink a cocktail. I said it would go right to my head and confuse me so that I would be in a helpless tangle in ten minutes. I did not want to act like a lunatic before strangers. But Artemus gently insisted, and I drank the treasonable mixture under protest, and felt all the time that I was doing a thing I might be sorry for. In a minute or two I began to imagine that my ideas were clouded. I waited in great anxiety for the conversation to open, with a sort of vague hope that my understanding would prove clear, after all, and my misgivings groundless.

Artemus dropped an unimportant remark or two, and then assumed a look of superhuman earnestness, and made the following astounding speech. He said:

"Now there is one thing I ought to ask you about before I forget it. You have been here in Silverland — here in Nevada — two or three years, and, of course, your position on the daily press has made it necessary for you to go down in the mines and examine them carefully in detail, and therefore you know all about the silver-mining business. Now what I want to get at is — is, well, the way the deposits of ore are made, you know. For instance. Now, as I understand it, the vein which contains the silver is sandwiched in between casings of granite, and runs along the ground, and sticks up like a curbstone. Well, take a vein forty feet thick, for example, or eighty, for that matter, or even a hundred — say you go down on it with a shaft, straight down, you know, or with what you call 'incline' — maybe you go down five hundred feet, or maybe you don't go down but two hundred — anyway, you go down, and all the time this vein grows narrower, when the casings come nearer or approach each other, you may say — that is, when

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they do approach, which, of course, they do not always do, particularly in cases where the nature of the formation is such that they stand apart wider than they otherwise would, and which geology has failed to account for, although everything in that science goes to prove that, all things being equal, it would if it did not, or would not certainly if it did, and then, of course, they are. Don't you think it is?"

I said to myself: "Now I just knew how it would be — that cocktail has done the business for me; I don't understand any more than a clam."

And then I said aloud: "I — I — that is — if you don't mind, would you — would you say that over again? I ought —"

"Oh, certainly, certainly! You see I am very unfamiliar with the subject, and perhaps I don't present my case clearly, but I —"

"No, no — no, no — you state it plain enough, but that cocktail has muddled me a little. But I will — no, I do understand for that matter; but I would get the hang of it all the better if you went over it again — and I'll pay better attention this time."

He said, "Why, what I was after was this."

Here he became even more fearfully impressive than ever, and emphasized each particular point by checking it off on his finger-ends.

"This vein, or lode, or ledge, or whatever you call it, runs along between two layers of granite, just the same as if it were a sandwich. Very well. Now, suppose you go down on that, say a thousand feet, or maybe twelve hundred (it don't really matter) before you drift, and then you start your drifts, some of them across the ledge, and others along the length of it, where the sulphurets — I believe they call them sulphurets, though why they should, considering that, so far as I can see, the main dependence of a miner does not so lie, as some suppose, but in which it cannot be successfully maintained, wherein the same should not continue, while part and parcel of the same ore not committed to either in the sense referred to, whereas, under different circumstances, the most inexperienced among us could not detect it if it were, or might overlook it if it did, or scorn the very idea of such a thing, even though it were palpably demonstrated as such. Am I not right?"

I said, sorrowfully: "I feel ashamed of myself, Mr. Ward. I know I ought to understand you perfectly well, but you see that cocktail has gone to my head, and now I cannot understand even the simplest proposition."

"Oh, don't mind it, don't mind it; the fault was my own, no doubt — though I did think it clear enough for —"

"Don't say a word. Clear! Why, you stated it as clear as the sun to anybody but an abject idiot; but it's that confounded cocktail that has played the mischief."

"No; now don't say that. I'll begin it all over again, and —"

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"Don't now — for goodness' sake, don't do anything of the kind, because I tell you my head is in such a condition that I don't believe I could understand the most trifling question a man could ask me."

"Now don't you be afraid. I'll put it so plain this time that you can't help but get the hang of it." Leaning far across the table, with determined impressiveness wrought upon his every feature, and fingers prepared to keep tally of each point enumerated; and I, leaning forward with painful interest, resolved to comprehend or perish: "You know the vein, the ledge, the thing that contains the metal, whereby it constitutes the medium between all other forces, whether of present or remote agencies, so brought to bear in favor of the former against the latter, or the latter against the former or all, or both, or compromising the relative differences existing within the radius whence culminate the several degrees of similarity to which —"

I said: "Oh, hang my wooden head, it ain't any use! — it ain't any use to try — I can't understand a thing. The plainer you get it the more I can't get the hang of it."

I heard a suspicious noise behind me, and turned in time to see Hingston dodging behind a newspaper, and quaking with a gentle ecstasy of laughter. I looked at Ward again, and he had thrown off his dread solemnity and was laughing also. Then I saw that I had been sold — that I had been made a victim of a swindle in the way of a string of plausibly worded sentences that didn't mean anything under the sun. Artemus Ward was one of the best fellows in the world, and one of the most companionable. It has been said he was not fluent in conversation, but, with the above experience in my mind, I beg to differ.

"Q"

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A SIMPLE ACT OF PIETY

by ACHMED ABDULLAH

HIS AFFAIR THAT NIGHT WAS prosy. He was intending the murder of an old Spanish woman around the corner, on the Bowery, whom he had known for years, with whom he had always exchanged courteous greetings, and whom he neither liked nor disliked.

He did kill her; and she knew that he was going to, the minute he came into her stuffy, smelly shop, looming tall, and bland, and yellow, and unearthily Chinese from behind the shapeless bundles of second-hand goods that cluttered the doorway. He wished her good evening in tones that were silvery, but seemed tainted by something unnatural. She was uncertain what it was, and this very uncertainty increased her horror. She felt her hair raise as if drawn by a shivery wind.

At the very last she caught a glimmer of the truth in his narrow-lidded, purple-black eyes. But it was too late.

The lean, curved knife was in his hand and across her scraggy throat — there was a choked gurgle, a crimson line broadening to a crimson smear, a thudding fall — and that was the end of the affair as far as she was concerned.

A minute later Nag Hong Fah walked over to the other end of Pell Street and entered the Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment. It was the gathering-place for the Chinese-born members of the Nag family, and there he occupied a seat of honor because of his wealth and charity and stout rectitude.

He talked for about half an hour with the other members of his clan, sipping fragrant, sun-dried Formosa tea mixed with jessamine flowers, until he had made for himself a bullet-proof alibi.

The alibi held.

For he is still at liberty. He is often heard to speak with regret — nor is it hypocritical regret — about the murder of Señora Garcia, the old Spanish woman who kept the shop around the corner. He is a good customer of her nephew, Carlos, who succeeded to her business. Nor does he trade there to atone, in a manner, for the red deed of his hands, but because the goods are cheap.

He regrets nothing. To regret, you must find sin in your heart, while the murder of Señora Garcia meant no sin to him. It was to him a simple action, respectable, even worthy.

For he was a Chinese, and, although it all happened between the chocolate-brown of the Hudson and the murky, cloudy gray of the East River, the tale is of the Orient. There is about it an atmosphere of age-green bronze; of first-chop *chandoo* and spicy aloe-wood; of gilt, carved statues brought

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out of India when Confucius was young; of faded embroideries, musty with the scent of the dead centuries. An atmosphere which is very sweet, very gentle — and very inhuman.

The elevated roars above. The bluecoat shuffles his flat feet on the greasy asphalt below. But still the tale is of China — and the dramatic climax, in a Chinese's story, from a Chinese's slightly twisted angle, differs from that of an American.

To Nag Hong Fah this climax came not with the murder of Señora Garcia, but with Fanny Mei Hi's laugh as she saw him with the shimmering bauble in his hands and heard his appraisal thereof.

Fanny Mei Hi was his wife, married to him honorably and truly, with a narrow gold band and a clergyman and a bouquet of wired roses bought cheaply from an itinerant Greek vendor, and handfuls of rice thrown by facetious and drunken members of both the yellow race and the white.

Of course, at the time of his marriage, a good many people around Pell Street whispered and gossiped. They spoke of the curling black smoke and slavery and other romantically wicked things. Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, spoke of — and to — the police.

Whereas Nag Hong Fah, who had both dignity and a sense of humor, invited them all to his house: gossipers, whisperers, Miss Edith Rutter, and Detective Bill Devoy of the Second Branch, and bade them look to their hearts' content; and whereas they found no opium, no sliding panels, and hidden cupboards, no dread Mongol mysteries, but a neat little steam-heated flat, furnished by Grand Rapids via Fourteenth Street, German porcelain, a case of blond Milwaukee beer, a five-pound humidor of shredded Kentucky burlap tobacco, a victrola, and a fine, big Bible with brass clamp and edges and M. Doré's illustrations.

"Call again," he said, as they were trooping down the narrow stairs. "Call again any time you please. Glad to have you — aren't we, kid?" chucking his wife under the chin.

"You bet yer life, you fat old sweetness!" agreed Fanny; and then — as a special barbed shaft leveled at Miss Rutter's retreating back — "Say! Any time yer wanta lamp my wedding certificate, it's hangin' between the fottygraphs of the President and the Big Boss — all framed up swell!"

He had met her first one evening in a Bowery saloon, where she was introduced to him by Mr. Brian Neill, the owner of the saloon, a gentleman from out the County Armagh, who had spattered and muddied his proverbial Irish chastity in the slime of the Bowery gutters, and who called himself her uncle.

This latter statement had to be taken with a grain of salt. For Fanny Mei Hi was not Irish. Her hair was golden, her eyes blue. But otherwise she was Chinese — easily nine-tenths of her. Of course she denied it. But that is neither here nor there.

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She was not a lady. But Nag Hong Fah, who was a poet and a philosopher, besides being the proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, said that she looked like a golden-haired goddess of evil, familiar with all the seven sins. And he added — this to the soothsayer of his clan, Nag Hop Fat — that he did not mind her having seven, nor seventeen, nor seven times seventeen bundles of sin, as long as she kept them in the sacred bosom of the Nag family.

"Yes," said the soothsayer, throwing up a handful of painted ivory sticks and watching how they fell, to see if the omens were favorable. "Purity is a jewel to the silly young. And you are old, honorable cousin ——"

"Indeed," chimed in Nag Hong Fah, "I am old and fat and sluggish and extremely wise. What price is there in purity higher than there is contained in the happiness and contentment of a respectable citizen when he sees men-children playing gently about his knees?"

He smiled when his younger brother, Nag Sen Yat, the opium merchant, spoke to him of a certain Yung Quai. "Yung Quai is beautiful," said the opium merchant, "and young — and of an honorable clan — and ——"

"*And* childless! *And* in San Francisco! *And* divorced from me!"

"But there is her older brother, Yung Long, the head of the Yung clan. He is powerful and rich — the richest man in Pell Street! He would consider this new marriage of yours a disgrace to his face. Chiefly since the woman is a foreigner!"

"She is not. Only her hair and her eyes are foreign."

"Where hair and eyes lead, the call of the blood follows," rejoined Nag Sen Yat, and he reiterated his warning about Yung Long.

But the other shook his head.

"Do not give wings to trouble. It flies swiftly without them," he quoted. "Too, the soothsayer read in the painted sticks that Fanny Mei Hi will bear me sons. One — perhaps two. Afterward, if indeed it be so that the drop of barbarian blood has clouded the clear mirror of her Chinese soul, I can always take back into my household the beautiful and honorable Yung Quai, whom I divorced and sent to California because she is childless. She will then adopt the sons which the other woman will bear me — and everything will be extremely satisfactory."

And so he put on his best American suit, called on Fanny, and proposed to her with a great deal of dignity and elaborate phrases.

"Sure, I'll marry you," said Fanny. "Sure! I'd rather be your wife than live the sorta life I'm livin' — see, Toodles?"

"Toodles" smiled. He looked her over approvingly. He said to himself that doubtless the painted sticks had spoken the truth, that she would bear him men-children. His own mother had been a river-girl, purchased during a drought for a handful of parched grain; and had died in the odor of

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sanctity, with nineteen Buddhist priests following her gaily lacquered coffin, wagging their shaven polls ceremoniously, and mumbling flattering and appropriate verses from *Chin-Kong-Ching*.

Fanny, on the other hand, knew that a Chinese is broad-minded and free-handed, that he makes a good husband, and beats his wife rather less often than other men of the corresponding scale of society.

Of course, gutter-bred, she was aggressively insistent upon her rights.

"Toodles," she said the day before the wedding, and the gleam in her eyes gave point to the words, "I'm square — see? An' I'm goin' to travel square. Maybe I haven't always been a poifec' lady, but I ain't goin' to bilk yer, get me? But —" She looked up, and suddenly, had Nag Hong Fah known it, the arrogance, the clamorings, and the tragedy of her mixed blood were in the words that followed: "I gotta have a shot of freedom. I'm an American — say!" — seeing the smile which he hid rapidly behind his fat hand — "yer needn't laugh, I *am* American, an' not a painted Chinese doll. No sittin' up an' mopin' for the retoin of my fat lord an' master in a stuffy, stinky, punky five-by-four cage for me! In other woids, I resoive for my little golden-haired self the freedom of asphalt an' electric lights, see? An' I'll play square — as long as you'll play square," she added under her breath.

"Sure," he said. "You are free. Why not? I am an American. Have a drink?" And they sealed the bargain in a tumbler of Chinese rice whisky, cut with Bourbon, and flavored with aniseed and powdered ginger.

The evening following the wedding, husband and wife, instead of a honeymoon trip, went on an alcoholic spree amid the newly varnished splendors of their Pell Street flat. Side by side, in spite of the biting December cold, they leaned from the open window and brayed an intoxicated pæan at the elevated structure which pointed at the stars like a gigantic icicle stood on end, frozen, austere — desolate, for all its clank and rattle — amid the fragrant, warm reek of China which drifted from shutters and cellar-gratings.

Nag Hong Fah, seeing Yung Long crossing the street, thought with drunken sentimentality of Yung Long's sister whom he had divorced because she had borne him no children, and extended a boisterous invitation to come up.

"Come! Have a drink!" he hiccoughed.

Yung Long stopped, looked, and refused courteously, but not before he had sent a slow, appraising glance at the golden-haired Mei Hi, who was shouting by the side of her obese lord. Yung Long was not a bad-looking man, standing there in the flickering light of the street lamp, the black shadows cutting the pale-yellow, silky sheen of his narrow, powerful face as clean as with a knife.

"Swell looker, your friend," com-

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mented Fanny Mei Hi as Yung Long walked away; and her husband, the liquor warming his heart into generosity, agreed.

"Sure! Swell looker! Lots of money! Let's have another drink!"

Arrived at the sixth tumbler, Nag Hong Fah, the poet in his soul released by alcohol, took his blushing bride upon his knee and improvised a neat Cantonese love ditty; but when Fanny awakened the next morning with the sobering suspicion that she had tied herself for life to a drunkard, she found out that her suspicion was unfounded.

The whiskey spree had only been an appropriate celebration in honor of the man-child on whom Nag Hong Fah had set his heart; and it was because of this unborn son and the unborn son's future that her husband rose from his tumbled couch, bland, fat, without headache or heartache, left the flat, and bargained for an hour with Yung Long who was a wholesale grocer, with warehouses in Canton, Manila, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Not a word was said about either Yung Quai or Fanny. The talk dealt entirely with canned bamboo sprouts, preserved leeches, pickled star-fruit, and brittle almond-cakes. It was only after the price had been decided upon and duly sealed with the right phrases and palm touching palm — after which, though nothing in writing had passed, neither party could recede from the bargain without losing face — that Yung Long remarked, very casually:

"By the way, the terms are cash — spot cash," and he smiled.

For he knew that the restaurant proprietor was an audacious merchant who relied on long credits and future profits, and to whom in the past he had always granted ninety days' leeway without question or special agreement.

Nag Hong Fah smiled in his turn; a slow, thin, enigmatic smile.

"I brought the cash with me," he replied, pulling a wad of greenbacks from his pocket, and both gentlemen looked at each other with a great deal of mutual respect.

"Forty-seven dollars and thirty-three cents saved on the first business of my married life," Nag Hong Fah said to his assembled clan that night at the Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment. "Ah, I shall have a fine, large business to leave to the man-child which my wife shall bear me!"

And the man-child came — golden-haired, blue-eyed, yellow-skinned, and named Brian in honor of Fanny's apocryphal uncle who owned the Bowery saloon. For the christening Nag Hong Fah sent out special invitations — pink cards lettered with virulent magenta and bordered with green forget-me-nots and purple roses, with an advertisement of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace on the reverse side. He also bestowed upon his wife a precious bracelet of cloudy white jade, earrings of green jade cunningly

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inlaid with blue feathers, a chest of carved Tibetan soapstone, a bottle of French perfume, a pound of Mandarin blossom tea for which he paid seventeen dollars wholesale, a set of red Chinese sables, and a new Caruso record for the victrola.

Fanny liked the last two best; chiefly the furs, which she wore through the whirling heat of an August day as soon as she was strong enough to leave her couch, on an expedition to her native pavements. For she held fast to her proclaimed right that hers was the freedom of asphalt and electric light — not to mention the back parlor of her uncle's saloon, with its dingy, musty walls covered with advertisements of eminent Kentucky distilleries and the indelible traces of many generations of flies, with its gangrened tables, its battered cuspidors, its commingling atmosphere of poverty and sloth, of dust and stale beer, of cheese sandwiches, wet weeds, and cold cigars.

"Get outa here!" she admonished a red-powdered bricklayer who came staggering across the threshold of the back parlor and was trying to encircle her waist with amatory intent. "I'm a respectable married woman — see?" And then to Miss Ryan, the side-kick of her former riotous spinster days, who was sitting at a corner table dipping her pretty little upturned nose into a foaming schooner: "Take my tip, Mamie, an' get married! That's the life, believe me!"

Mamie shrugged her shoulders.

"All right for you, Fan, I guess," she replied. "But not for me. Y'see — ye're mostly —"

"I ain't! I ain't! I'm American!" And then, seeing signs of contrition on her friend's face: "Never mind. Toodles is good enough for me. He treats me right, all right, all right!"

Nor was this an overstatement of the actual facts.

Nag Hong Fah was good to her. He was happy in the realization of his fatherhood, advertised every night by lusty cries which reverberated through the narrow, rickety Pell Street house, to find an echo across the street in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company, where the members of his clan predicted a shining future for father and son.

The former was prospering. The responsibilities of fatherhood had brought an added zest and tang to his keen, bartering Mongol brain. Where before he had squeezed the dollar, he was now squeezing the cent. He had many a hard tussle with the rich Yung Long over the price of tea and rice and other staples, and never did either of them mention the name of Yung Quai, nor that of the woman who had supplanted Yung Quai in the restaurant keeper's affections.

Fanny was honest. She traveled the straight and narrow, as she put it. "Nor ain't it any strain on my feet," she confided to Miss Ryan. For she was happy and contented. Life, after all, had been good to her, had brought her prosperity and satisfaction at the hands of a fat Chinese, at the end of her fantastic, twisted youth; and there

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were moments when, in spite of herself, she felt herself drawn into the surge of that Mongol race which had given her nine-tenths of her blood — a fact which formerly she had been in the habit of denying vigorously.

She laughed her happiness through the spiced, warm mazes of Chinatown, ready to be friends with everybody, her first-born cuddled to her breast.

It was thus that Yung Long would see her walking down Pell Street as he sat in the carved window-seat of his store, smoking his crimson-tasseled pipe, a wandering ray of sun dancing through the window, wreathing his pale, serene face with opal vapors.

He never failed to wave his hand in courtly greeting.

She never failed to return the civility.

Some swell looker, he was — but she was square, all right, all right!

A year later, after Nag Hong Fah, in expectation of the happy event, had acquired an option on a restaurant farther uptown, so that the second son might not be slighted in favor of Brian, who was to inherit the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, Fanny sent another little child into the reek and riot of the Pell Street world. But when Nag Hong Fah came home that night, the nurse told him that the second-born was a girl — something to be entered on the debit, not the credit, side of the family ledger.

It was then that a change came into the marital relations of Mr. and Mrs. Nag Hong Fah.

Not that the former disliked the baby daughter, called Fanny, after the mother. Far from it. He loved her with a sort of slow, passive love, and he could be seen on an afternoon rocking the wee bundle in his stout arms and whispering to her crooning Cantonese fairy-lilts: all about the god of small children whose face is a candied plum, so that the babes like to hug and kiss him and, of course, lick his face with their little pink tongues.

But this time there was no christening, no gorgeous magenta-lettered invitations sent to the chosen, no happy prophecies about the future. This time there were no precious presents of green and white jade heaped on the couch of the young mother.

She noticed it. But she did not complain. She said to herself that her husband's new enterprise was swallowing all his cash; and one night she asked him how the new restaurant was progressing.

"What new restaurant?" he asked blandly.

"The one uptown, Toodles — for the baby ——"

Nag Hong Fah laughed carelessly.

"Oh, I gave up that option. Didn't lose much."

Fanny sat up straight, clutching little Fanny to her.

"You — you gave it up?" she asked. "Wottya mean — gave it up?"

Then, suddenly inspired by some whisper of suspicion, her voice leaping up extraordinarily strong: "You mean you gave it up — because — because little Fanny is — a *goil?*"

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He agreed with a smiling nod.

"To be sure! A girl is fit only to bear children."

He said it without any brutality, without any conscious male superiority; simply as a statement of fact. A melancholy fact, doubtless. But a fact, unchangeable, stony.

"But — but —" Fanny's flow of words floundered in the eddy of her amazement, her hurt pride and vanity. "I'm a woman myself — an' I ——"

"Assuredly you are a woman and you have done your duty. You have borne me a son. Perhaps, if the omens be favorable, you will bear me yet another. But this — this girl —" He dismissed little Fanny with a wave of his pudgy, dimpled hand as a regrettable accident, and continued, soothingly: "She will be taken care of. Already I have written to friends of our clan in San Francisco to arrange for a suitable disposal when the baby has reached the right age." He said it in his mellow, precise English. He had learned it at a night school, where he had been the pride and honor of his class.

Fanny had risen. She left her couch. With a swish-swish of knitted bedslippers she loomed up in the ring of faint light shed by the swinging petroleum-lamp in the center of the room. She approached her husband, the baby held close to her heart with her left hand, her right hand aimed at Nag Hong Fah's solid chest like a pistol. Her deep-set, violet-blue eyes seemed to pierce through him.

But the Chinese blood in her veins — shrewd, patient — scotched the violence of her American impulse to clamor loudly for right and justice and fairness. She controlled herself. The accusing hand relaxed and fell gently on the man's shoulder. She was fighting for her daughter, and it would not do to lose her temper.

"Looka here, Toodles," she said. "You call yerself an American, don't yer? Well, have a heart. An' some sense! This ain't China, Toodles. Li'l' Fanny ain't goin' to be weighed an' sold to some rich brother Chinese at so many seeds per pound. Not much! She's gonna be eddycated. She's gonna have her chance, see? Believe me, Toodles, I know what I'm talkin' about!"

But he shook his stubborn head. "All has been settled," he replied. "Most satisfactorily settled."

He turned to go. But she rushed up to him. She clutched his sleeve.

"Yer — yer don't mean it? Yer can't mean it!" she stammered.

He made a slight, weary gesture, as if brushing away the incomprehensible. "You are a woman — you do not understand ——"

"Don't I, though!"

She spoke through her teeth. Her words clicked and broke like dropping icicles. Swiftly her passion turned into stone, and as swiftly back again, leaping out in a great, spattering stream of abuse.

But he only lit a cigarette, and smiled placidly, and suddenly she knew that it would be impossible to

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argue, to plead with him. Might as well plead with some sardonic, deaf immensity, without nerves, without heart. And then, womanlike, the greater wrong disappeared in the lesser.

"So that's why yer gave me no presents when li'l' Fanny was born. Because she's a goil! An' I thought yer was savin' up the ducats to give li'l' Fanny a start in life! Well, yer got another guess comin'! Yer gonna do wot I tell yer, see? Yer gonna open up that there new restaurant uptown, an' yer gonna give me presents! A bracelet, that's what I want! None o' yer measly jade, either, but the real thing, get me? Gold an' diamonds, see?" and she was still talking as he, unmoved, silent, smiling, left the room and went down the creaking stairs to find solace in the spiced cups of the Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment.

She rushed up to the window and threw it wide. She leaned far out, her hair framing her face like a glorious, disordered aureole, her loose robe slipping from her gleaming shoulders, her violet eyes blazing fire and hatred.

She shouted at his receding back:

"A bracelet, that's what I want! That's what I'm gonna get, see? Gold an' diamonds! Gold an' diamonds, yer fat pig, yer!"

It was at that moment that Yung Long passed the house. He heard, looked up, and greeted her courteously, as was his custom. But this time he did not go straight on his way. He looked at her for several seconds, taking in the soft lines of her neck and shoulders, the small, pale oval of her face with the crimson of her broad, generous mouth, the white flash of her small, even teeth, and the blue, sombre orbit of her eyes. With the light of the lamp shining in back, a breeze rushing in front past the open window, the wide sleeves of her dressing gown fluttered like immense, rosy butterfly wings.

Instinctively she returned his gaze. Instinctively, straight through her rage and heartache, the old thought came to her mind. And then without realizing what she was doing, her lips had formed the thought into words:

"Swell looker!"

She said it in a headlong and vehement whisper that drifted down, through the whirling reek of Pell Street — sharp, sibilant, like a message.

Yung Long smiled, raised his neat bowler hat, and went on his way.

Night after night Fanny returned to the attack, cajoling, caressing, threatening, cursing.

"Listen here, Toodles ——"

But she might as well have tried to argue with the Sphinx for all the impression she made on her eternally smiling lord. He would drop his amorphous body into a comfortable rocker, moving it up and down with the tips of his felt-slippered feet, a cigarette hanging loosely from the right corner of his coarse, sagging lips, a cup of lukewarm rice whiskey con-

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venient to his elbow, and watch her as he might the gyrations of an exotic beetle whose wings had been burned off. She amused him. But after a while, continuous repetition palled into monotony, and, correctly Chinese, he decided to make a formal complaint to Brian Neill, the Bowery saloon keeper who called himself her uncle.

Life, to that prodigal of Erin, was a rather sunny arrangement of small conveniences and small, pleasant vices. He laughed in his throat and called his "nephew" a sentimental old fool.

"Beat her up!" was his calm, matter-of-fact advice. "Give her a good hiding, an' she'll feed outa yer hand, me lad!"

"I have — ah — your official permission, as head of her family?"

"Sure. Wait. I'll lend ye me blackthorn. She knows the taste of it."

Nag Hong Fah took both advice and blackthorn. That night he gave Fanny a severe beating and repeated the performance every night for a week until she subsided.

Once more she became the model wife, and happiness returned to the stout bosom of her husband. Even Miss Rutter, the social settlement investigator, commented upon it. "Real love is the shelter of peace," she said, when she saw the Nag Hong Fah family walking down Pell Street, little Brian toddling on ahead, the baby cuddled in her mother's arms.

Generously Nag Hong Fah overlooked his wife's petty womanish vanities; and when she came home one afternoon, flushed, excited, exhibiting a shimmering bracelet that was encircling her wrist — "just imitation gold an' diamonds, Toodles!" she explained. "Bought it outa my savings — thought yer wouldn't mind, see?" — he smiled and took her upon his knee as of old.

"Yes, yes," he said, his pudgy hand fondling the intense golden gleam of her hair. "It is all right. Perhaps — if you bear me another son — I shall give you a real bracelet, real gold, real diamonds. Meanwhile you may wear this bauble."

As before, she hugged jealously her proclaimed freedom of asphalt and electric lights. Nor did he raise the slightest objections. He had agreed to it at the time of their marriage and, being a righteous man, he kept to his part of the bargain with serene punctiliousness.

Brian Neill, whom he chanced to meet one afternoon in Señora Garcia's second-hand emporium, told him it was all right.

"That beatin' ye gave her didn't do her any harm, me beloved nephew," he said. "She's square. The Lord help the lad who tries to pass a bit o' blarney to her." He chuckled in remembrance of a Finnish sailor who had beaten a sudden and undignified retreat from the back parlor into the saloon, with a ragged scratch crimsoning his face and bitter words crowding his lips. "Faith, she's square! Sits there with her little glass o' gin an' her auld chum, Mamie Ryan —

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an' them two chews the rag by the hour, talkin' about frocks and frills ——"

Of course, once in a while she would return home a little the worse for liquor. But Nag Hong Fah, being generous, would mantle such small shortcomings with the wide charity of his personal laxity.

"Better a drunken wife who cooks well and washes the children and keeps her tongue between her teeth than a sober wife who reeks with virtue and breaks the household pots," he said to Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer.

"Indeed! Better a fleet mule than a hamstrung horse," and the other re-enforced his opinion with a chosen and appropriate quotation from the *Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King*.

When late one night, with a high wind booming from the north and washing the snow-dusted Pell Street houses with its cutting blast, Fanny came home with a jag, a chill, and a hacking cough, and went down with pneumonia seven hours later, Nag Hong Fah was genuinely sorry. He turned the management of his restaurant over to his brother, Nag Sen Yat, and sat by his wife's bed, whispering words of encouragement, bathing her feverish forehead, changing her sheets, administering medicine, doing everything with fingers as soft and deft as a woman's.

Even after the doctor had told him three nights later that the case was hopeless and that Fanny would die — even after, as a man of constructive and practical brain, he had excused himself for a few minutes and had sat down in the back room to write a line to Yung Quai, his divorced wife in San Francisco, bidding her hold herself in readiness, and enclosing a hundred dollars for transportation — he continued to treat Fanny Mei Hi with the utmost gentleness and patience.

Tossing on her hot pillows, she could hear him in the long watches of the night, breathing faintly, clearing his throat cautiously so as not to disturb her; and on Monday morning — he had lifted her up and was holding her close to help her resist the frightful, hacking cough that was shaking her wasted frame — he told her that he had reconsidered about little Fanny.

"You are going to die," he said placidly, in a way apologetically, "and it is fitting that your daughter should make proper obeisance to your departed spirit. A child's devotion is best stimulated by gratitude. And little Fanny shall be grateful to you. For she will go to a good American school and, to pay for it, I shall sell your possessions after you are dead. The white jade bracelet, the earrings of green jade, the red sables — they will bring over four thousand dollars. Even this little bauble" — he slipped the glittering bracelet from her thin wrist — "this, too, will bring a few dollars. Ten, perhaps twelve; I know a dealer of such trifles in Mott Street who ——"

"Say!"

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Her voice cut in, raucous, challenging. She had wriggled out of his arms. An opaque glaze had come over her violet-blue eyes. Her whole body trembled. But she pulled herself on her elbows with a terrible, straining effort, refusing the support of his ready hands.

"Say! How much did yer say this here bracelet's worth?"

He smiled gently. He did not want to hurt her woman's vanity. So he increased his first appraisal.

"Twenty dollars," he suggested. "Perhaps twenty-one. Do not worry. It shall be sold to the best advantage — for your little daughter ——"

And then, quite suddenly, Fanny burst into laughter — gurgling laughter that shook her body, choked her throat, and leaped out in a stream of blood from her tortured lungs.

"Twenty dollars!" she cried. "Twenty-one! Say, you poor cheese, that bracelet alone'll pay for li'l' Fanny's eddycation. It's worth three thousand! It's real, real — gold an' diamonds! Gold an' diamonds! Yung Long gave it to me, yer poor fool!" and she fell back and died, a smile upon her face, which made her look like a sleeping child, wistful and perverse.

A day after his wife's funeral Nag Hong Fah, having sent a ceremonious letter, called on Yung Long in the latter's store. In the motley, twisted annals of Pell Street the meeting, in the course of time, has assumed the character of something epic, something Homeric, something almost religious. It is mentioned with pride by both the Nag and the Yung clans; the tale of it has drifted to the Pacific coast; and even in far China wise men speak of it with a hush of reverence as they drift down the river on their painted houseboats. . . .

Yung Long received his caller at the open door of his shop.

"Deign to enter first," he said bowing.

Nag Hong Fah bowed still lower.

"How could I dare to?" he retorted, quoting a line from the *Book of Ceremonies and Exterior Demonstrations*, which proved that the manner is the heart's inner feeling.

"*Please* deign to enter first," Yung Long emphasized, and again the other gave the correct reply: "How should I dare?"

Then, after a final request, still protesting, he entered as he was bidden. The grocer followed, walked to the east side of the store, and indicated the west side to his visitor, as Chinese courtesy demands.

"Deign to choose your mat," he went on, and after several coy refusals Nag Hong Fah obeyed again, sat down, and smiled gently at his host.

"A pipe?" suggested the latter.

"Thanks. A simple pipe of bamboo, please, with a plain bamboo mouthpiece and no ornaments."

"No, no!" protested Yung Long. "You will smoke a precious pipe of jade with a carved amber mouthpiece and crimson tassels!"

He clapped his hands, whereupon one of his young cousins entered with

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a tray of nacre, supporting an opium-lamp, pipes and needles and bowls, and horn and ivory boxes neatly arranged. A minute later the brown opium cube was sizzling over the open flame, the jade pipe was filled and passed to Nag Hong Fah, who inhaled the gray, acrid smoke with all the strength of his lungs, then returned the pipe to the boy, who refilled it and passed it to Yung Long.

For a while the two men smoked in silence — men of Pell Street, men of lowly trade, yet men at whose back three thousand years of unbroken racial history, racial pride, racial achievements, and racial calm, were sitting in a solemn, graven row — dignified men.

Yung Long was caressing his cheek with his right hand. The dying, crimson sunlight danced and glittered on his well-polished fingernails.

Finally he broke the silence.

"Your wife is dead," he said with a little mournful cadence at the end of the sentence.

"Yes." Nag Hong Fah inclined his head sadly; and after a short pause: "My friend, it is indeed reasonable to think that young men are fools, their brains hot and crimson with the blinding mists of passion, while wisdom and calm are the splendid attributes of older men ——"

"Such as — you and I?"

"Indeed!" decisively.

Yung Long raised himself on his elbows. His oblique eyes flashed a scrutinizing look and the other winked a slow wink and remarked casually that a wise and old man must first peer into the nature of things, then widen his knowledge, then harden his will, then control the impulses of his heart — then establish good order in his family.

"Truly spoken," agreed Yung Long. "Truly spoken, O wise and older brother! A family! A family needs the strength of a man and the soft obedience of a woman."

"Mine is dead," sighed Nag Hong Fah. "My household is upset. My children cry."

Yung Long slipped a little fan from his wide silken sleeves and opened it slowly.

"I have a sister," he said gently, "Yung Quai, a childless woman who once was your wife, O wise and older brother."

"A most honorable woman!" Nag Hong Fah shut his eyes and went on. "I wrote to her five days ago, sending her money for her railway fare to New York."

"Ah!" softly breathed the grocer; and there followed another silence.

Yung Long's young cousin was kneading, against the pipe, the dark opium cubes which the flame gradually changed into gold and amber.

"Please smoke," advised the grocer.

Nag Hong Fah had shut his eyes completely, and his fat face, yellow as old parchment, seemed to have grown indifferent, dull, almost sleepy.

Presently he spoke: "Your honorable sister, Yung Quai, will make a most excellent mother for the children of my late wife."

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"Indeed."

There was another silence, again broken by Nag Hong Fah. His voice held a great calmness, a gentle singsong, a bronze quality which was like the soft rubbing of an ancient temple gong, green with the patina of the swinging centuries.

"My friend," he said, "there is the matter of a shimmering bracelet given by you to my late wife ——"

Yung Long looked up quickly; then down again as he saw the peaceful expression on the other's bland features and heard him continue:

"For a while I misunderstood. My heart was blinded. My soul was seared with rage. I — I am ashamed to confess it — I harbored harsh feelings against you. Then I considered that you were the older brother of Yung Quai and a most honorable man. I considered that in giving the bracelet to my wife you doubtless meant to show your appreciation for me, your friend, her husband. Am I not right?"

Yung Long had filled his lungs with another bowlful of opium smoke. He was leaning back, both shoulders on the mat, so that he could keep his lungs filled all the longer with the fumes of the kindly, philosophic drug.

"Yes," he replied after a minute or two. "Your indulgent lips have pronounced words full of harmony and reason. Only — there is yet another trifling matter."

"Name it. It shall be honorably solved."

Yung Long sat up and fanned himself slowly.

"At the time when I arranged a meeting with the mother of your children," he said, "so as to speak to her of my respectful friendship for you and to bestow upon her a shimmering bracelet in proof of it, I was afraid of the wagging leaky tongues of Pell Street. I was afraid of scandal and gossip. I therefore met your wife in the back room of Señora Garcia's store, on the Bowery. Since then I have come to the conclusion that perhaps I acted foolishly. For the foreign woman may have misinterpreted my motives. She may talk, thus causing you as well as me to lose face, and besmirching the departed spirit of your wife. What sayeth the *Li-Ki*? 'What is whispered in the private apartments must not be shouted outside.' Do you not think that this foreign woman should — ah ——"

Nag Hong Fah smiled affectionately upon the other.

"You have spoken true words, O wise and older brother," he said rising. "It is necessary for your and my honor, as well as for the honor of my wife's departed spirit, that the foreign woman should not wag her tongue. I shall see to it tonight." He waved a fat, deprecating hand. "Yes, I shall see to it. It is a simple act of family piety — but otherwise without much importance."

And he bowed, left the store, and returned to his house to get his lean knife.

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INDIAN SIGN

by WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM

WHITE FOOL, THE CHEYENNE chief, was our nearest neighbor and most frequent visitor. Often he appeared beside the windmill, standing motionless until someone approached, and said, "How." Then after a long silence he would ask for a drink. He refused our tin cup, but would catch water in his broad black-felt hat and drink from that. Despite his great age, his hair was shiny black and hung in two long braids. Even on the hottest days he wore a heavy blanket. We spoke of him as the wooden Indian, and wondered what he thought behind that old oaken face.

He was in our house the day the telephone was installed. Dad rang up the Indian agent in town and asked if there was a Cheyenne hanging around the office who would talk to White Fool. The old chief took the receiver when Dad handed it to him and put it to his ear. He did not change expression but rather quickly handed the receiver back to Dad. "Telephone smart," he said, "talk Cheyenne already."

Later Mother wished Dad hadn't shown him the telephone. "Now if they go on the warpath," she said, "they'll know enough to cut the wire and we can't ring the general alarm."

"Warpath my eye!" Dad said.

A few weeks after that, the general alarm rang in the middle of the night and Dad ran to the phone. I had missed the last Indian scare by being born six months too late, but I dressed as fast as I could for this one. However, Dad came back to bed and said it was only Razorback Johnson calling to say the new teacher was missing. She boarded at Razorback's place; when she hadn't shown up, he went to the schoolhouse but could not find her. We were to meet at the school at sunup.

Mother said she had wondered about that teacher. Dad said maybe she was just too good-looking to live in a new country without a man to protect her. I undressed and went back to bed.

When Dad and I rode up to the school next morning, a half-dozen men were there, including some of the old settlers who had lived in the Territory three years. They acted as if they were at a funeral, or something mighty serious. Then I saw my Cheyenne friend, Little Foot, sitting on the well-curb. He had drunk too much "horse medicine" and was still very wobbly. The men had found him sleeping in the road. "Horse medicine" was the Indian pronunciation of a patent medicine that was almost pure alcohol. Little Foot was one of my heroes and I hoped someday to ride as well as he could. He

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often stopped to powwow at our place and he had given me my Indian name, Spotted Face, because of my freckles.

Razorback Johnson seemed to have taken charge of the men at the school, although he was a newcomer, from Arkansas. Dad always said some of the finest people in the world came from Arkansas, but Razorback was not one of them. The Indians called him Long Whiskers because his mustaches were long enough to tickle his ears.

"Looks like the teacher met up with this Cheyenne," Razorback Johnson said. His wife stood there, just looking at him as he spoke.

"Mot be," said an old settler from Texas.

We were fixing to start looking for the teacher when White Fool and three other Cheyennes rode up. White Fool said, "How," and Dad returned the greeting. A long silence followed; then White Fool said, "Horse belong Little Foot come set-down. We come catch-em Little Foot."

"White squaw teacher all gone," Dad said. "No come set-down. You help catch-em white squaw."

Two Indians dismounted, scolded Little Foot in Cheyenne, and impatiently boosted him to a horse. White Fool pointed to two buzzards hanging high and rode off across the sandhills. We mounted and followed.

"Them buzzards know when somethin' dies," the Texan said, "but mot be a daid coyote."

After we rode for half an hour, White Fool found a place where the ground was freshly kicked up and there was a funnel-shaped hole some two feet deep which a coyote had dug. White Fool dismounted, reached into the hole, and pulled up an edge of blue cloth.

"Hit's what she had on yesterday," Razorback said. "We better look for a tall cottonwood and string up that drunk Indian."

I felt sick at the sight of the blue cloth, but I could not fully comprehend the horror of the teacher's death. I admired her — but she was new and strange and hardly real. Little Foot, however, was part of my life. Nobody else could sometimes hit a jack rabbit with an arrow, shooting from horseback at a dead run.

"We don't know a blamed thing about who killed her," Dad said.

White Fool knew what was going on and he knew that the Indians, armed with only butcher knives, had no chance against the whites with guns; but if he was scared he showed no trace of it. He walked up to Dad, who had dismounted, and said, "Tenderfoot kill-em. No savvy coyote."

Dad translated. "He says some newcomer killed her that don't know coyotes will dig up anything unless you bury it real deep."

Other whites dismounted now, scooped the loose dirt out of the grave with their hands, and lifted the body out. A Cheyenne lent his blanket to cover it.

"Where I come from," one of the

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whites said, "if we found a dead woman and a drunk Indian, there was one less Indian."

"Where I come from," Dad said, "we found out first what happened."

"The Bible speaks about lusting after strange flesh," the man persisted.

"Strange flesh can be the same color as your own," Dad said.

I did not know what they meant, but I understood things were coming to a head when men's eyes began to bulge and their lips got white.

Only White Fool was busy. He stepped into the shallow grave, got down on his knees, and lifted out pinches of dirt. He bent low and blew and straightened up. "Shovel sick," he said. "Tenderfoot come long ways, plenty rocks."

"What'd he say?" Razorback asked.

Dad pointed. "See, he uncovered a spade mark down there that didn't get covered because she was over it. And there's another one. Look at the up-and-down grooves where the spade cut into the ground. The blade of the spade's been notched in a couple of places and bent back, so that it leaves grooves. A spade gets notched like that from hitting hard rocks — and there's not a rock within twenty miles of here hard enough to notch a spade. White Fool says the man who killed her came from a rocky country. We got to look for a spade with the edge busted like that — a sick shovel, just as White Fool says."

We looked at White Fool now with awe and amazement. He could see when we were blind, and speak when we were dumb. There was another long silence. I did not know what was going on, but Dad later explained the men were waiting for somebody to get nervous and make a break.

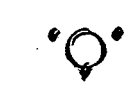
"Well," Razorback said finally, "whatever you fellers decide is all right with me, but I gotta go home and milk and I'll be right back."

"Some of us better go *help* you milk," Dad said.

Razorback jumped for his horse but the Texan grabbed him. . . .

When we rode over to Razorback's place later, his wife quickly found the spade with two notches. "It ain't much good," she said, "and you just take it to the sheriff." There was a wild look in her eyes, but she did not break down. "Lately I been thinkin' maybe he was a skunk," she said, "the way he acted when that teacher was around."

"Long Whiskers coyote," White Fool said. In Cheyenne there's nothing worse you can call a man than coyote.



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MONEY ON THE FLOOR

by BECHHOFER ROBERTS

I DON'T suppose that more than half a dozen people know that A. B. C. Hawkes investigated and solved the mystery of young Charles Gassett's death. Hawkes's name was not mentioned in the newspaper reports of the inquest, and the verdict of "death by misadventure" suggested that there was really no mystery to solve.

Nor perhaps is it known that "A. B. C." — I may as well refer to him by his familiar initials — had for several years been a close friend and adviser of Gassett. Indeed, anybody familiar with the appearance and habits of the two would have thought them the last men in the world to come together.

A. B. C. was a compact of eccentricities. You had only to see him walking (or, rather, hopping) down the street, always in his well-cut gray frock-coat and sponge-bag trousers, always with a gay flower in his buttonhole and a twirling malacca cane in his hand, always with that oddly shaped silk hat perched on his mop of red hair, always animated and usually talking boisterously to whoever was with him — you had only to take in this surprising vision to recognize that you were seeing a genius or a madman.

And there was no doubt about his genius; even the least intelligent newspaper-reader knew his name as one honored in many branches of science and associated, especially, with a great share in the scientific side of our war effort.

It is true that the average newspaper-reader was unlikely to recognize the strange little man in the stranger clothes as the famous A. B. C. but this was because he loathed publicity and used every means — from peaceful persuasion to direct violence — to prevent his photograph being taken by pressmen.

Gassett was very different. He was a dour, dark, excessively shy young Scot, scarcely twenty-five years old at the time of his strange death. He rarely spoke, never smiled, and was careful to avoid the least touch of unconventionality.

Yet, A. B. C. and he were close friends. The secret of their attachment — apart, of course, from the respect of the younger man for the other, and A. B. C.'s good-natured interest in a promising youngster — lay, I suspect, in their extreme tidiness.

Gassett was so conscientious in this respect that a messily conducted experiment or a dirty laboratory nauseated him; while A. B. C. attached so much importance to tidiness that, to set his colleagues an example, he even wore his usual clothes at his work, knowing that never a drop of acid would stain them or the quickest

From THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE STORIES (*London: 1934*)

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manipulation of instruments warp the crease of his trousers or insert one in his frock-coat.

Using the privilege of an old school friend to enter his laboratory without hindrance, I used often to come upon him and Gassett together at one of the tables — A. B. C. radiant and voluble, Gassett grim and silent — poring over papers covered with, to me, unintelligible formulae and calculations, or fiddling with delicately adjusted galvanometers and oscillographs.

For Gassett was intent on developing a new method of wireless reception, and A. B. C. was guiding him in his laborious work.

I lost sight of Gassett after a time, for he went on working at Cambridge, while A. B. C. took me cruising in his yacht, in which he still, after so many years, pursued his curious hobby of investigating the scale coloration of fishes.

But we were very unpleasantly reminded of the young man when we returned to England after a long cruise in the Red Sea and bought a newspaper on the landing-stage at Southampton, for the headlines of a column on the front page hurled themselves at us:

YOUNG SCIENTIST'S TRAGIC DEATH
DRAMATIC DISCOVERY IN MILLIONAIRE'S HOUSE

And we saw Gassett's name in the first line.

According to the report, the young man had been paying a visit to the country house of Joseph Steinling, the "famous financier," and, being left alone for a short time in the library, was then found dead on the floor, apparently electrocuted by a monster wireless set which, with fatal carelessness, he had inspected too closely.

A. B. C. shook his head slowly as, disregarding the hilarity of the Southampton urchins at his appearance, he read the report aloud, half to himself, half to me. "It's odd! By Archimedes, it's odd! And it's made odder by the gorge-raising jargon of the journalist. 'Tragic' — yes. But 'dramatic'—why? What can be less dramatic than a death which nobody anticipates and which, apparently, nobody sees?"

Then, recovering from this anger, he said, "Why should we not take a look at the scene of poor Gassett's death, Johnstone? It lies on what is more or less our road to London, and I happen to be slightly acquainted with millionaire Steinling. I do not care for him; but I will overcome my distaste for his personality."

He spoke to his chauffeur and we were soon bowling along the London road. In about half an hour we reached the entrance to the park in which the financier's house was set, and five minutes later we stood in the hall, and A. B. C. had sent in his card to the police-officer in charge of the case. He did not, I noticed, ask to see the owner of the house.

"I hope the inspector will see me," A. B. C. murmured to me as the butler went off with his card.

"Of course he will," I replied.

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This remark would have been found inoffensive or, at worst, flattering by most people, but it drew down on me a flood of my friend's fury.

"Great Rutherford, what next?" he cried. "Am I to understand that you suffer from the fiction-reading public's delusion that the police are not merely fools but self-confessed fools? Do you imagine that a professional detective warmly welcomes the advent of an amateur? Would *you* trust a private detective with even the simplest commission if you could possibly enlist the aid of Scotland Yard? My dunderhead Johnstone, there are moments when you exceed even my notorious patience!"

I was relieved when we saw a little group of people hurrying to us down the hall. Evidently my guess had been correct, for, not only did the police-inspector salute A. B. C. respectfully, but a little bald-headed man whom I recognized as Joseph Steinling also held out his hand to us and thanked us for a visit which, he said, might help to clear up any difficulties that the police were experiencing.

It was one of A. B. C.'s idiosyncrasies never to shake hands with anyone but a tried friend, so I was not in the least surprised to see him ignore the financier's welcome. Instead, he bowed coldly to him and opened a fire of questions at the inspector and his colleagues. Their answers and Steinling's interjections soon gave us the whole story, so far as they knew it.

Gassett, it seemed, had run short of money for the completion of his work on the new kind of tube with which he was experimenting; its effect, if he could perfect it, would be enormously to increase the range of wireless reception, and to simplify problems of transmission by preventing interference and bringing into use wavelengths of centimetres and tens and hundreds of metres.

He had approached Steinling for aid, and the latter invited him to his house to discuss the proposition. Gassett arrived, and the financier was so well satisfied with the progress that the young man claimed to be making — though, Steinling admitted, he had only their conversation to go on — that he had agreed to advance Gassett ten thousand pounds for his immediate needs.

Gassett, the inspector went on, had shown professional interest in a powerful 400-volt wireless set which stood in the library, and was examining its inner construction when his host went out to write the check.

"I warned him to be careful," said Steinling, "but he only laughed."

A few minutes later, when Steinling returned to the library with the check, he was horrified to find Gassett lying dead on the floor, evidently electrocuted by the current passing through the set.

"And that's all there is to it," the inspector ended. "We've had the doctor here, and he's positive the gentleman was electrocuted. But you can satisfy yourself, if you like, Professor."

"Don't call me 'professor,'" said A. B. C., whom this title always of-

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fended. "I hate the term! Save it for your newspaper scientists!"

Steinling spoke. "It seemed too horrible to leave the poor fellow lying on the floor of the library. I made my chauffeur switch off the main current, to make sure that no more harm would be done. Then we carried Mr. Gassett to a couch in another room and telephoned to his brother to come here at once."

"Very thoughtful of you," A. B. C. commented.

I refused the inspector's invitation to accompany A. B. C. and, instead, I let Steinling lead me into the library.

The wireless set stood between the big windows, with a wire hanging from it, which Gassett had dislodged when the fatal charge passed through him; a chalked outline on the carpet showed where his body had been found.

Then A. B. C. and the inspector entered, and the financier repeated his explanation. "I thought it best to run a chalk round the body before it was moved," he added.

A. B. C. examined the wireless set, and in a few moments he and Steinling were deep in conversation, little of which I could hear.

Before long a note of argument entered their conversation and the worse side of A. B. C.'s nature took control. "You are talking nonsense, my money-merchant," he boomed. "You tell me that this set has a voltage of 400; I tell you two-dimensionally that you lie. Have you such a thing as a volt-meter in this misarchitected edifice?"

Steinling, whom long business experience had doubtless taught to humor quick-tempered people, replied mildly enough that, though he was not himself an expert in electrical matters, he had always been led by his chauffeur to believe that the voltage of the set was 400.

The financier rang for his chauffeur. The man soon arrived, a thick-set fellow with a heavy jowl and an air of ponderous incivility. When he brought the volt-meter, A. B. C. quickly adjusted the loose wire and took a reading of the high tension.

He switched it off and turned to the financier. "I find that the voltage is 600," he said. "Do you mean to tell me that you didn't know that?"

Steinling shook his head unhappily.

"Well, there you are, Prof — *Mister* Hawkes," said the inspector. "That explains it. The poor gentleman got more than he bargained for." Then, turning to Steinling, he said, "I think we've seen all we want to see. You'll not have the set interfered with before the inquest, will you?"

"That will be all right, Inspector," said Steinling. "Is there anything else you want left as it is? This chalk mark, for example?" He pointed gingerly towards the ill-omened outline on the carpet.

The inspector pondered, and A. B. C. put in a word. "If we are to assume that Gassett was fool enough to tinker with a wireless set so clumsily as to electrocute himself, and that he was frail enough to allow a current of 600 volts to kill him, we may rea-

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sonably assume that he would fall in the only place where he must have fallen."

The inspector nodded sagely. "That's what I think, sir; we don't need to worry about the marks. I know where the body was found."

Steinling rang the bell again and told the butler to send in a housemaid to sweep up the chalk. The inspector departed, apologizing to Steinling and A. B. C., of whom he seemed to stand in much awe, for any trouble he had given them.

A little maid, pale with fright and excitement, was led in by the butler, who pointed majestically to the chalk marks where Gassett's body had lain. She stepped forward towards them, then stopped abruptly, and, dropping her brush and pan, covered her face with her hands.

"Na, na, I canna!" she whimpered, her Scottish accent coming out. "There's a man has deid there — I can see it."

A. B. C., I noticed, was looking keenly at the girl, who stood blushing at her misdemeanor.

"Didn't you know the gentleman died in this room, my dear?" my friend asked her gently.

"Ay, sir, I knew fine that the gentleman deid in this room, but I didna know he had deid just there."

"And you don't like to go near the place, eh?" said A. B. C.

"Na, I'm afeart."

"Do you often feel like this when you are in a place where something strange has happened?"

"Oh ay," the girl replied. "Mebbe I hae the sicht, like ma mither."

"What's she say?" Steinling asked, as the butler bustled the girl out of the room.

"Apparently the girl has, or thinks she has, the faculty of second-sight," A. B. C. told us. "Clairvoyance is the more technical term. By merely touching or contemplating an inanimate object, a clairvoyant can sense incidents associated with it."

"It sounds uncanny," the financier commented, as a footman tiptoed in and hastily swept up the chalk marks. "But it's feasible, I suppose. It is curious that the maid should pick out the very spot where poor Gassett died. Though, of course, she was almost the last person to see him alive."

A. B. C. looked up. "How was that?"

Steinling explained. "I was already waiting for him here when he arrived. Just as the butler announced him, the maid, doubtless thinking the room empty, ran in by that other door over there, behind the curtains. It leads to the service staircase."

"What happened then?" A. B. C. asked.

"Oh, the moment she saw me here, she hurried out."

"And she didn't come back again?"

Steinling shook his head.

A. B. C. asked no more questions, and we left the financier gloomily regarding the fatal wireless set. The butler opened the front door to us with a superb sweep of his arm.

"By the way, my good servitor, is

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that girl still to be seen?" A. B. C. asked him.

"I reely couldn't say, sir," the man replied. "She was took sort of ill after that business in the library, sir, so I told her she could go 'ome."

"Then she doesn't live in the house?"

"No, sir, she lives in the lodge by the drive gates, along of her father. You will pass the lodge as you drive out, sir."

I was not surprised when A. B. C. told his chauffeur to stop at the lodge and, leaving me in the car, he knocked at the door. It was opened by a sturdy man in tweeds, whom I assumed to be the girl's father. A few words passed between them which I could not hear, but the man's tone suggested that he was protesting against some suggestion which A. B. C. had made. Then my friend spoke for some time in a persuasive voice and, at last, the man invited him indoors.

It must have been half an hour before A. B. C. came out, placing his hat on his red head at an outrageous angle, as he always did when he was puzzled. I, too, was puzzled when he told our chauffeur to turn the car round and drive back to the big house.

The butler opened the door to us, his professional impassivity struggling with curiosity at our return, and showed us into the library while he went to tell his master.

No sooner were we alone than A. B. C., flinging his hat and cane on a chair, dropped on his knees and, strangely reckless of the possible damage to his trouser-crease, inspected the floor like a dog smelling for rabbits. But he scarcely glanced at the spot where the young man's body had been found; instead, he seemed more interested in the center of the room.

After a while I heard him exclaim under his breath, then, flinging aside a small table and a rug on which it stood, and whirling round on his knees like a dervish, he pointed to a number of small, round indentations on the carpet beside him.

"Johnstone, Johnstone," he said urgently. "Bring that rug and table back, and draw up a couple of chairs. Set them as nearly as possible where the marks show they were standing before. Quick!"

I did what he told me, and we fitted the chairs to the indentations. Then A. B. C. made another odd request. "You don't happen to have a half-crown in your pocket, do you?"

I found one and gave it to him, just as Steinling appeared at the door.

A. B. C., usurping his host's rights, motioned him into one of the chairs we had just placed in position, and himself sat down in the other. As he did so, I noticed him slip my half-crown under one of his patent-leather shoes.

Steinling's eyebrows rose at being ordered about in his own house, but he merely said, "To what do I owe the honor of this second visit, Mr. Hawkes?"

"I have a little matter of business to discuss with you, gentle sir," said A. B. C.

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"Business? Today? Despite what has happened in this room?"

"No, because of it," my friend answered drily. "Some people think me eccentric, Steinling. Perhaps I am. And one of my little eccentricities is to pretend that I am an agent of the excise authorities. Tell me, good sir, have you taken out a license for your wireless set?"

The financier's face revealed his astonishment. "I suppose so," he said.

"How much did you pay for it?" my friend persisted.

"A few shillings, I presume," replied Steinling, "the same as everybody else."

"Only the same as everybody else!" said A. B. C. loudly. "Then I will come right down to business. It has come to my knowledge that you have a powerful electrical generator in this house. We will assume, therefore, that you intend to install a second wireless set. You really ought to pay more than other people."

"I intend nothing of the kind!" the financier cried. "In any case, what I do is none of your business. Kindly leave my house, Mr. Hawkes!"

But A. B. C. wagged a finger at him. "Not so hasty, my good host," he murmured and, pointing his finger downward, moved his foot just enough to reveal the half-crown that had been hidden by it.

I looked from him to Steinling. The financier fell back like a man who has been struck on the point of the jaw; his hands still gripped the sides of his chair, but he no longer seemed to have the strength or the will to move.

He gazed at A. B. C. in utter terror. And, when he tried to speak, only inarticulate sounds came.

"Assuming that you have no license for your proposed second wireless set," A. B. C. went on, as if unaware of the other man's emotion, "I must ask you, in my self-appointed capacity as an excise officer, to pay over to me a sum that I shall decide on."

"What do you mean?" Steinling stammered. He had grown very pale.

"What I say. I hereby, herewith, and with all the other trimmings of pseudo-legal phrasing, demand from you the sum of four hundred thousand pounds, in default of which payment I shall be compelled to report to the proper authorities the proposed existence of your other wireless set. I need hardly tell you that more than one section of the authorities would be interested in my information."

He pointed his finger at the shrinking financier. "The police, for example, are likely to be interested in certain matters concerning Mr. Gassett's death."

Steinling trembled so fantastically that I thought he would never be able to speak. "This is blackmail," he said at last.

"I prefer to call it blood-money," said A. B. C. "Though I really do not feel obliged to tell you this, it is my intention to place part of the money in the hands of trustees for those members of Gassett's family who were dependent on him for their livelihood. The rest I shall use for providing trav-

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eling fellowships for exceptionally brilliant young scientists.

"I myself neither need money nor wish to take it from you. Go and write a check for four hundred thousand pounds, if you please, generous Mr. Steinling; and, at the same time, I shall be grateful for whatever papers you filched from your victim."

It seems almost incredible that the financier should have struggled to his feet and tottered from the room without another word.

A. B. C. turned to me. "You desire enlightenment, friend Johnstone? Let us endeavor to reconstruct a crime. I guarantee its accuracy in the main, though doubtless we shall err in details. You will play the part of Mr. Gassett, a young but unfortunate genius. I shall represent Joseph Steinling, a financier of indubitable villainy.

"The scene opens with Steinling alone on the stage; we may suppose him standing here in the middle of the room, arranging these two chairs as you and I arranged them just now. But the rug was not here."

Saying which, A. B. C. jumped to his feet and, pocketing my half-crown, imitated Steinling placing the chairs in position near the little table.

"Right! Now, enter the butler, that gorgeous specimen of the higher servility whom we have already had sufficient occasion to admire. He announces a Mr. Gassett, whom Steinling is expecting by appointment — whom, indeed, he is very eagerly expecting. Since you, my Johnstone, are Gassett, oblige me by going to the door, getting yourself shown in by a phantasmal butler, and behaving accordingly."

I did as A. B. C. asked, and began to enter the room as Gassett must have done.

"Stop!" cried A. B. C. suddenly, before I had gone a couple of steps. He was standing beside the little table. "Remember that friend Steinling was kind enough to tell us that, at this moment in the episode which we are seeking to reproduce, the Scottish maidservant ran in from the other door and, presumably making flustered apologies, waited for Gassett to pass her. Then she left the room again. Now, I ask, what did she see? Look!"

He bent down for an instant and, performing in exaggeratedly slow-motion an action that might have been done in a second, he placed the half crown on the floor and covered it with his foot. "Forward, Johnstone, alias Gassett!" he cried.

I approached him, and, after we had shaken hands, he waved me into a chair, himself dropping into the one immediately behind him.

"At this point," A. B. C. went on, "the two characters of our drama may be assumed to indulge in a conversation of some length.

"I will not pretend to know exactly what line it took, but my guess is that Steinling endeavored to persuade Gassett to sell him his invention. Gassett, who was always in agreement with my own view — namely, that scientific discoveries should, like

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medical discoveries, be placed at the disposal of experts throughout the world and not be used for private gain — doubtless refused to consider a sale."

"Then why should he write to Steinling for a subsidy?"

"We have only Steinling's word for that. I think it more probable that he invited Gassett to come, and that the latter, like so many other scientists, held naively optimistic views on the public-spiritedness of people like our host.

"To proceed, let us suppose that Steinling then pretends to accept his visitor's point of view, and offers to subsidize Gassett's work, without thought of private gain, provided the young man will satisfy him that the invention has reached maturity. Gassett then shows his private papers and the all-too-benevolent Steinling expresses delight and admiration.

"Finally, our financier agrees to write a check for ten thousand pounds as a gift for Gassett's laboratory. Then — and here the crisis of our little drama begins — we may suppose that Steinling directs his visitor's attention to the wireless set in the window. Gassett goes over to it — oblige me by so doing, Johnstone — and Steinling then rises and leaves the room, ostensibly to write a check."

A. B. C. rose from his chair, and stood on one side.

"Let us suppose that I am now absent. You, on the other hand, being an intelligent man — *qua* Gassett, I mean, of course — quickly realize that there is nothing of the slightest interest to you in the wireless set. What do you do then? Demonstrate, my actor!"

I had at first no notion of what Gassett would have done. Then I saw the half-crown lying on the floor, where A. B. C. had left it when he rose. I stooped to pick it up.

"What an actor! A modern Roscius!" A. B. C. cried with mock admiration. "That is, of course, precisely what poor Gassett did, though I have reason to suppose that the trap was baited for him with a gold coin, not a silver one. His natural astonishment at seeing a valuable coin lying on the carpet, to say nothing of his Scots' prudence, inevitably made him bend down, as you did, to pick it up."

A. B. C. kicked the coin out of the way and showed me a tiny hole in the carpet beneath where it had lain; a mark like a burn, a few inches across, discolored the material round the hole. Then, taking a pocket-knife, he slit the carpet in either direction, reckless of the damage he caused to its lovely texture, and, pulling the pieces aside, he pointed to another small hole bored in the floor beneath.

I stared without comprehension.

"You still don't understand, my gentle friend?" A. B. C. taunted. "Let me suggest to you the purpose of this carpentry. Suppose the benevolent Steinling leads a carefully insulated wire to these holes from a powerful generator in some other part of this building. Suppose, also, that the moment he leaves the room — ostensibly

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to write a check — he switches on the current. Poor Gassett stoops, touches the gold coin, and is promptly electrocuted. Hence, the slight burn which you observed in the carpet. The murderous Steinling switches off the current, and quickly moves the body over beside the wireless set, disarranges the set to make it appear that Gassett died through touching it, pockets the gold coin and removes the incriminating wire. He then throws the rug over the burn and replaces the occasional table. Thus the stage is set for Gassett's body to be found."

At this moment the butler entered the room and, disdaining to seem aware of the ruin of the carpet, handed A. B. C. an envelope.

"Mr. Steinling is not feeling very well, sir. He told me to give you this envelope, sir, and 'oped that you would excuse him."

A. B. C. tore open the envelope, and inspected the contents, which consisted of a check and a sheaf of papers.

"All in order," he told the butler. "You may tell Mr. Steinling that, provided he makes arrangements with his bank to honor this check without demur, I hope never to meet him again." He turned to me. "Now, my friend, we may continue our interrupted journey to London."

He sat silent in the car until we drove past the lodge at the gates. Then he crooked his thumb over his shoulder.

"That little housemaid has cost her master four hundred thousand pounds," he observed. "I trust that he will not try to take it out of her wages!" And A. B. C. laughed uproariously at his own joke.

"Ah, now I understand!" I cried. "You used the girl's second-sight to show you how the murder was done!"

A. B. C. looked at me scornfully.

"Melodramatic Johnstone, have you no memory? Do you forget that the silly girl seemed to sense Gassett's death where the chalk marks were beside the wireless set? — just as Steinling desired.

"No, no, my friend; I place no reliance in the supernatural. But what I do believe is that a young person who can convince herself that she possesses second-sight must have an extremely suggestible nature and be a likely subject for successful hypnosis. And so she was. I had some difficulty in winning her father's consent to my proposal, but an unfounded hint that his employer desired it conquered his objections.

"I had also to take great care not to suggest to the girl, both before and after I had thrown her into an hypnotic condition — which, as you know, is a very simple process — what I wanted her to tell me. In any case, I had no idea what, if anything, she would reveal to me. I merely asked her to describe what she saw when she burst into the room at the moment when Gassett was announced by the butler. Together with a number of unimportant details, she disclosed that Steinling had bent down and slipped a gold coin under his shoe."

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"But why didn't she tell us that before?" I asked.

"Because she didn't remember it. Because she had never been conscious of it. True, she had seen the movement — she must have — but she saw it, as the popular phrase goes, without taking it in. I had to draw it from the depths of her subconscious.

"Then I began to think. Why should Steinling slip a gold coin under his boot? The inference was — mischief. I put the square root of two and two together, and took a chance. The discovery of the little hole and the burn in the carpet and in the boards beneath, coupled with the position of the two chairs and the rug, suggested that I was right. The check in my pocket proves it."

"But what made you think, in the first place, that Gassett's death was not an accident?" I asked him.

"A typically unintelligent question, Johnstone. Do you seriously imagine that a man of his neatness of thought and handiwork would expose himself to such a fool's death?"

"It was brilliant of you to pick on the girl as the key to the mystery."

"You are trying to flatter me, Johnstone, and clumsily. It was not brilliant; I was at a loss and took a shot in the dark. I could hardly expect Steinling to tell me the truth."

And then I came to the chief matter that lay on my conscience. "I must say, A. B. C., it goes against the grain to let that brute go scot-free. You've made him pay heavy blood-money, as you call it; but if ever a man deserved hanging, he does."

"Maybe," A. B. C. agreed. "But could one prove him guilty in court? I doubt it. In the circumstances, I think the world will be better served by the use to which I shall put this check, and by my retention of the papers — on which I shall now work — than by his appearance on a charge of murder, from which he might well escape without damage. At the same time, sweet coz, I am not without hope that Steinling will have cause to regret his crime."

"You mean that his conscience will plague him?" I asked.

"Holy Darwin, no! Not his conscience, but his chauffeur. My faith in human nature will be shaken if he does not make his master's life a burden."

"In which case," I suggested, "Steinling will probably dispose of him, too."

A. B. C. shook his head.

"If for a moment I may use regrettably unscientific terms, I would say that the devil will look after his own — and my money is on the chauffeur."

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WITH A BOW TO BOUCHER

In his "Criminals at Large" column in "The New York Times Book Review" of November 18, 1951, Anthony Boucher had some cogent things to say about the "Vanishing American" type of detective story. "The hardboiled private detective story," Mr. Boucher wrote, "has become so thoroughly debased that I can imagine many former devotees of 'Black Mask,' where it all started, now automatically closing a book as soon as they see that it deals with a 'private eye.' Actually the course of the Hammett-Chandler type of novel has divided; and if one branch has flowed into cesspools of (one would have thought) unpublishable obscenity, the other has emerged on a plateau of even fresher and more invigorating atmosphere. The best of the modern private op stories may be few, but they mark an advance even over the Hammett entries in a greater depth of humanity and warmth, a richer understanding of social responsibility and of the psychological meaning of crime."

Then Mr. Boucher nominates, as the leaders in the "renascence of the tough detective story," John Ross Macdonald and Bart Spicer.

*We now bring you (and through the recommendation of Mr. Boucher himself, as it happened) Howard Schoenfeld's first story in the crime field. It is not a private-eye story in the Hammett-Chandler technique, but surely the influences of Hammett and Chandler are readily discernible, and perhaps the equally powerful influence of the W. R. Burnett-*LITTLE CAESAR *school. But on the basis of Schoenfeld's first attempt in the crime field (he has written "for all sorts of periodicals under all kinds of conditions, the range being from 'The Nation' to 'Fantasy and Science Fiction' "), Mr. Schoenfeld might easily become a figure to reckon with, should he ever decide to write a "traditional" private-eye, rough-tough-and-cuff shocker.*

Mr. Schoenfeld's first crime story, which won a Special Award in EQMM's Seventh Annual Contest, explores some of the very avenues of inquiry which Mr. Boucher attributes to the best type of contemporary hardboiled tale — the branch concerned with an "understanding of social responsibility and of the psychological meaning of crime." Mr. Schoenfeld's "The Tea Pusher" is a story of dope peddling, as seen through the eyes of the peddler rather than through the eyes of a private (or official) detective. The author actually did his research quite some time ago, but he delayed writing the story until the recent narcotic investigations put the spotlight on the whole drug situation. "The Tea Pusher" is topical, and

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will remain topical so long as the sale of dope, especially to teen-agers, remains uncontrolled; it is also a realistic, totally unglamorous study whose revelations, the author hopes, will help readers understand the sordid, revolting conditions which exist behind the newspaper exposés we have all been reading lately.

THE TEA PUSHER

by HOWARD SCHOENFELD

JOE BUSBY WAS STANDING BEHIND the cigar counter in his pool hall that day when I went in. He was about fifty, a fat little guy from Georgia with a red face and a big behind. He still had the cracker drawl and the mouthful of ain'ts he'd brought with him to New York. His place on Third Avenue was as crummy as they come.

I went over to the counter.

"Hi yah, Joe. How's business?"

"I ain't complaining. Take a look."

I looked around. A few punks shooting pool. Joe, lighting a cigar, threw the match on the floor.

"I got a real business here, Carl. These pool tables of mine ain't been empty once today. No, sir, not once."

"Yeah?"

"And that back room of mine. Why, that ain't been empty twice in the past year."

"I know it, Joe, and it's a funny thing. I've been thinking about that back room of yours. I can't see how you make anything off of it. I didn't know it could be done off of games like those."

"What do you mean, games like those? Those games are on the level."

"That's what I mean."

He gave me a look.

"Say. What're you driving at?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I got a funny idea somewhere."

"Yeah? What kind of an idea?"

"Well, I'll tell you, Joe. I got an idea you're paying the cops off on those games of yours just to keep them away from something you *aren't* paying them off on."

"Say. Have you gone nuts?"

"Yeah. I've gone so nuts I've been checking up on you, and I know you haven't made a dime off of this dump since you opened it."

He put his cigar in his mouth and twisted it around a couple of times. He didn't say anything. He didn't have to. His face said it for him.

"Maybe you've got an idea why I'm staying open then?"

"Yeah, maybe I have. Maybe you're running a front for something with a lot of dough in it. On the other hand maybe you're putting on a show so you can sell out to a sucker at a profit. That's what I'd *say* if anybody asked me. See what I mean?"

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He saw all right.

"Listen, Carl," he said. "Let's go upstairs where there ain't nobody hanging around. If you got something on your mind you can get it off up there."

He came out from behind the counter and we went upstairs to the stock room.

"All right," he said. "Let's have it."

I looked at him across the desk.

"I'm cutting in on you, Joe. You're pushing tea here and I'm going to grab myself a hunk of it."

"You got me wrong. I ain't pushing tea."

"I know how I've got you. Behind the eight-ball. You're pushing tea and you're chiseling the cops on it."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Look, Joe. It's the cops you're chiseling. You're running chicken-feed dice games and paying them chicken feed to stay away from here. When I tell them you're doing it to keep them from finding out you've got another business they're going to get sore. They're going to take it out of your hide. And when they get through taking it out of your hide they're going to cut in on you. And you know the kind of cut some cops take."

I let that sink in.

"On the other hand, all I want to do is make a living."

He didn't say anything.

"Well," I said. "Which is it, me or them?"

He didn't answer.

"Okay. It's your funeral."

I started toward the door.

"Wait a minute," he said.

I waited.

He wiped his forehead.

"I'll think it over."

"Nothing doing."

I opened the door.

He rose halfway from his chair.

"Okay," he said. "Okay. Come on back in."

I went over and sat down . . .

Jean, standing near the window, held the curtain aside, and looked out.

"It's snowing, Carl," she said.

"I know it," I said.

"Come and watch it."

"What for? It's only snow."

"Come and watch it anyway."

"Go to hell," I said.

I sat there, looking at her.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well?" she said.

"Was there something you wanted to say?"

"No. Was there something you wanted to say?"

"I said it."

"Is that all?"

"No. It isn't. I'm sick of you and your ugly face."

Jean, turning quickly, looked out the window. She'd been in an accident when she was a kid. She couldn't stand it when you talked about her face.

"You skunk," she said. "You low-down dirty skunk."

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"My!" I said. "My! My!"

"If you're so sick of me why don't you leave?"

"I'm going to."

"Go ahead. No one can stop you. You can put on your hat and coat and walk out any time."

"I know it," I said.

"Go ahead. See how you like bumming dimes on the street now. That's what you were doing when I found you."

"Found me is right. You were looking for a bum that night. I knew it the minute I laid eyes on you. I said to myself, there's a gal out looking for a man. Any kind of a man. Just look at that face. Anybody with a face like that needs it in the worst way. That's what I said."

She clutched the curtain till her knuckles got white.

"I don't doubt it. That's just like you."

"You're blamed right it is. If it wasn't, you never would've got me."

"I know it. I also know you haven't got guts enough to walk out on me. You'd like to, but you're afraid. You might have to go to work."

"That's what you think," I said. "I'm starting to work tonight. What's more I've got the neatest little proposition lined up you ever heard of."

She faced me. She was afraid now. You could see it in her eyes.

I stood up. I picked my hat and coat up off the the couch and put them on. I looked at her.

"How do you like those apples?" I asked her.

She didn't say anything for a moment. She just stood there, looking scared.

"What're you going to do, Carl?" she asked.

I walked over to the door.

"Wouldn't you like to know," I said.

I slammed the door.

But when I got downstairs I remembered I'd forgotten to do the one last thing I'd intended to, so I turned around and went back up. She was standing by the window, crying, when I opened the door. She was always moping around that window. She'd be there when I went out, and she'd be there when I came back, no matter what time it was, watching for me. Well, she wouldn't have to watch any more.

She wiped her eyes with her handkerchief.

"I'm so glad you came back," she said, sniffling. "You didn't really mean it, did you, Carl?"

"No," I said.

"I'm so glad. I nearly died when you walked out of here. I thought you really had something lined up. You haven't really. Have you, honey?"

"No," I said. "That is, nothing much. Maybe I'll do a little work for Joe."

"What kind of work?"

"Racking balls or shilling. Something like that."

"Oh."

"Look, Jean. I need some money. I haven't got a cent."

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"All right, honey," she said. She went over to a chair and picked up her purse. She didn't have anything but a ten. "How much do you want?" she asked.

"Give it to me," I said. "I need it."

She gave me the bill. I went over to the door.

"What time will you be back?" she asked.

"I won't be back," I said.

"Aw, honey, tell me when."

"I told you," I said. "I won't be back."

One of the two reasons why I went back after the money was that I wanted her to have that to remember me by. The other reason was that I needed the money to pay the taxi fare over to Joe's poolroom.

He wasn't in the poolroom. He was upstairs in the stock room.

He was sitting at his desk with his back toward me. He had a drawer open, mixing tea with tobacco. After he got a pile he started rolling it into cigarettes. He was going to get twice as much as he started with.

I stood there, watching him.

"That's a hell of a thing you're doing, Joe," I said.

He nearly jumped out of his skin.

I laughed at him.

"You're not afraid of me, are you, Joe?"

He sneered.

There was a stack of cigar boxes on the floor. He pointed to them.

"There they are. You ready?"

"Yeah."

I picked up the boxes.

"And don't take any chances."

"You don't have to worry about that," I said.

I went downstairs and walked three blocks down the street. Then I caught a cab.

"Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth Street," I told the driver.

I'd of told him Twelfth Street like I was supposed to, only it was still snowing. As it was, I got off at Fourteenth Street and walked down to the Salvation Army building. I stood in the doorway and waited. According to my watch it was about time.

At eight o'clock a man came out of the door behind me.

"Got a cigarette, bud?"

"Sure," I said. "What kind do you want?"

"Pink ones."

"Sure."

I handed him one of the boxes and he handed me a roll of bills. Then I walked down to Seventh Avenue and caught another cab. I delivered four boxes in less than two hours. Two hundred dollars in two hours. Not bad at all. This was the kind of business I wanted to be in.

I made seven more deliveries that night.

The next morning I sent a bellhop over to Jean's place for my clothes.

That night Joe was waiting for me in the stock room.

"There was a dame over here looking for you," he said.

"Yeah?"

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"Who was she?"

"No one."

Coming down the Salvation Army building steps, I bumped into her.

I grabbed her wrist.

"What're you doing here?"

"Don't, Carl. You're hurting me."

"I ought to twist it off. What do you mean, spying on me?"

"I wasn't spying on you. I just wanted to see you."

"What about?"

I pulled her into a doorway.

"Listen. How'd you get here, anyway?"

"I followed you."

"Where from?"

"That pool hall."

"Well, don't follow me any more. I don't want to see you again."

She started to cry.

"I'm warning you. If I catch you following me again I'll brain you."

I walked out of the doorway down to the corner. I didn't think she'd follow me but, just the same, all the way uptown I kept looking out the back of the cab.

I delivered to the guy at the Salvation Army three nights a week. Those nights I made eleven other deliveries. Two other nights a week I delivered big in Jersey City.

I stayed away from Joe's place in the daytime. I spent my time driving around town or in the bar at the hotel where I was living. Once I took a waitress to a swanky night club up in the Fifties.

Things went along all right for about two months. Then one day Jean came up to the hotel to tell me she'd moved to a different apartment, a place on Charles Street.

I didn't know how she'd found out where I was living.

I knew I was going to have to do something about her. I didn't know what, yet.

I was drinking beer at the bar in my hotel one day when a girl came in that I liked the looks of. She was about twenty with blue eyes and light hair. She sat on the stool next to mine and ordered a beer. When the bartender brought it she opened her purse and took out a box of aspirin. She took two with her beer. Then she put a cigarette in her mouth.

I offered her a light.

"Thanks," she said.

"Headache?" I asked.

"No. Toothache. I just had one pulled."

"Does it feel better now?"

"No. It hurts like the deuce."

"Try a glass of whiskey."

She looked at me.

"All right."

I ordered Scotch.

She drank it.

"That was the first drink of whiskey I ever had."

"How'd you like it?"

"All right. I guess."

"Feel better yet?"

"Not yet."

"Have another one."

"All right."

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I ordered another one. She drank it.

"How do you feel now?"

She loosened her coat.

"Whew."

I laughed.

"I feel better," she said. "I'm all warm inside."

"That's a good sign."

"I'm all right now. I feel good."

"I'm glad to hear it."

"I feel very good."

"Here. Have another cigarette."

"All right."

"Do you live here in the hotel?"

"No. I just stopped in for a toothache. I mean a beer for my toothache. I live in the school around the corner."

"You live in a school?"

"Uh huh."

"What sort of a school?"

"A finishing school."

"Oh."

I drank my beer.

"What do you do?" she asked.

"I'm a cigarette salesman."

"Do you live here in the hotel?"

"Yeah."

"Have you been a salesman long?"

"Two or three months."

"The reason I asked was I was wondering how old you are. I'm eighteen."

"What's your name?"

"Virginia Stevens."

"I'm Carl Sanders."

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Sanders."

"Call me Carl and I'll call you Virginia."

"All right."

"Let's have a drink on it."

"I don't think I'd better. I might get drunk if I had another one."

"What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing. Only I never have."

"You ought to. You'd like it."

"I might at that."

"Then why don't you?"

"I'm afraid I'd get into trouble."

"Forget it."

I ordered a Scotch and a beer.

"Really, I don't think I'd better."

"It won't hurt you."

She drank it.

I ordered another one.

"I don't want any more."

"Why not?"

"I just don't want it."

I looked at her.

"What's the matter?"

"I don't feel so good."

Her face was getting a pasty look.

"Dizzy?"

"Uh huh."

"Want to lie down a while?"

I figured she'd come out of it, so I took her to my room.

She lay on the bed.

"Keep your eyes closed," I told her. "You'll be all right."

She didn't answer.

I sat in a chair and looked at her. Her face was chalky now. I decided she was too sick. When she began to breathe regularly I got up and went out.

She was still there, asleep, when I came back. It was after one o'clock.

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I'd made a delivery in Jersey City.

I woke her up.

"Hello," I said.

"Hello," she said.

"It's after one o'clock."

"It is? Oh."

"How do you feel?"

"Terrible."

I poured her a drink.

"Here. Drink this."

"I don't want it."

"Drink it."

I made her take it.

"Why didn't you wake me before?"

"I wasn't here."

"That's awful."

"What's so awful about it?"

"I'll get into trouble at school. I should've been in hours ago."

"Tell them your grandmother died or something. You can make up a story."

"That's easy to say."

She got up and went over to the dresser.

"I look like something the cat dragged in," she said.

"I wouldn't say that," I said.

She powdered her nose.

"What're you going to do?" I asked.

"Go back to school."

"Why don't you stay here? I'll help you make up a story."

"Oh, I can't do that."

"Why not? You'll be safe with me."

"It isn't that. I don't want to impose on you any more."

"You aren't imposing on me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll have a steak sent up. You'll be able to think better on a full stomach."

"All right," she said.

I pushed my chair back from the table.

"Did you like the steak?"

"Uh huh. It was good."

"Cigarette?" I asked, offering her a reefer.

"What is it?"

"It's a special kind. A friend in the company blends them for me."

"Oh."

I lit it for her.

She took a puff. She gagged.

I laughed.

"Don't mind that," I said. "The first puff on these is always like that."

I lit one for myself.

"Inhale deep," I said. "Like this."

I don't know what she told them when she went back to school the next morning.

She was back in my room that afternoon.

"Carl."

"Yeah."

"What was in that cigarette?"

"What cigarette?"

"The one you gave me last night."

"I don't know. Why?"

"There was dope in it, wasn't there?"

I didn't answer.

"Wasn't there?"

"I guess so."

"You know there was. What kind was it?"

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"Marihuana."

"Is that the kind of cigarette you sell?"

I didn't answer.

"Is it? I want to know."

"Yeah."

She didn't say anything.

"What difference does it make?"

"I don't know."

That night I took her to supper at the Waldorf-Astoria. She fitted in like a glove. She had what it takes: class.

We were driving around in my car.

"Where does your family live, Carl?"

"I haven't any."

"None at all?"

"They're dead."

"I'm sorry."

"I was, too."

"What'd you do?"

"I went on the bum."

"Why?"

"I didn't have any place else to go."

"Didn't you have any friends or anything?"

"No."

"What's it like on the bum?"

"Pretty bad at first. Then you get toughened up."

She put her hand on my knee.

"Do you love me?"

"Sure."

"A lot?"

"Yeah."

"Where're we going?"

"I don't know. Where do you want to go?"

"Let's go back to the hotel."

"All right."

I turned the car around.

"What kind of people go to finishing schools, Virginia?"

"Stupid ones, mostly."

"They've got money, though, some of them?"

"I suppose so."

"What do they do for excitement?"

"Go to movies. Have dates. Why?"

"I was thinking we'd have a party for your friends some night. You think they'd like that?"

"I guess so."

She was in my room with three of her friends and three college boys. The radio was blasting away. I could hear it in the hall when I stepped out to hand the house dick a ten spot. I waited till the dick got on the elevator. Then I went back in.

"Hey, Sanders."

"Yeah."

"Duck."

I ducked. A wet towel slapped up against the wall behind me. The guy who threw it was standing in the bathroom door, grinning at me. He was a college boy named Gus Ryan.

The other two college boys were in the middle of the room holding highballs in their hands, egging on one of the girls who was giving them her idea of a burlesque queen teasing the customers.

Virginia and a girl named June something-or-other were at the table mixing drinks. The party had been going about two hours.

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Most of that time the other girl, a little brunette, had been sitting on the couch, trying to look bored.

I went over and sat by her.

She took a sip of her drink.

Virginia came over and handed me a highball.

The college boy, Ryan, came in from the bathroom, pounding his chest.

"I'm Tarzan. I want my mate."

The girl named June slut-walked past him.

"Hi, Tarz."

He grabbed her and they started doing an apache dance.

The other two college boys laughed.

The girl who had been teasing them looked disappointed.

I waited till the liquor began to let them down. Then I lit a reefer and passed it.

"What is it?" Ryan asked. He held it is his hand like it was a bomb.

"You smoke it," I told him.

"It's marihuana," Virginia said.

"Go ahead and try it," I said.

"Not me. I don't want to be a dope fiend."

"Don't be silly," Virginia said.

"I've smoked plenty of them," I told them.

They looked at me like I was a freak.

"I smoked one, too," Virginia said.

"What was it like?"

"You'll have to try it to find out," I said.

"That's right," Virginia said.

"I'll try it," Ryan and his liquor said.

"So will I," the girl named June said.

"I'm game," the little brunette said.

I looked at one of the other college boys.

"I'll try it if everybody else will," he said.

Everybody else would. I got up and closed the windows. Virginia told them to inhale deep.

What woke me up was the phone ringing. I answered it. It was Jean.

"Hello. Is that you, Carl?"

"Yeah. What do you want?"

"How are you, honey?"

"Is that what you woke me up for? To ask me that?"

"I didn't mean to wake you up. I'm sorry."

"A fat lot of good that does. What do you want?"

"I want to see you."

"What about?"

"I want you to come down and see my new apartment."

"I haven't got time."

"You've got plenty of time for a certain blonde."

"How'd you find out about that?"

"That's my business. Are you coming to see me or not?"

"I'm not."

"Maybe you'd better."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Maybe I know a good reason why you'd better."

"You've found out something, have you?"

"I've found out you and that pool-

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hall friend of yours are selling dope."

"All right. What about it?"

"The police'll find out about it, too, unless you start being nice to me."

"Don't make me laugh," I said.

I hung up.

"Where the hell've you been?" Joe asked.

"Why? What's eating you?"

"That dame was here again. The one that was here a couple of months ago. She knows more about my business now than I do."

"What of it?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all. Except that she's going to the cops with it."

"Don't let her kid you. She isn't going to the cops."

"That's what you think. She didn't sound like she was kidding to me."

"She just wants to talk to me. I'll take care of her."

"You'd better. How'd she find out so much, anyway?"

"She followed me one night."

"Well, you got to do something about her."

"All right. I said I would."

I bought a pair of knucks, smoked a tea stick, and went down to her place on Charles Street. I stood in front of it until it got dark. Then I went in and knocked on her door. She opened it. When she saw me her face lit up like a Christmas tree.

"Carl, honey, I'm so glad to see you. I was afraid you wouldn't come."

"You knew I would."

I took my coat off.

"Honey, don't be mad at me. I wasn't really going to the police. I only said I was because I couldn't stand having you go around with another girl."

I didn't say anything.

"If you're going to be mad at me I don't want you to stay. I haven't seen you in so long. Please don't be mad, honey."

"I'm not."

"You mean it?"

"Sure. I'm not mad."

She sat in a chair.

"I'm so glad."

"Let's see the rest of the apartment."

I got her into the kitchen to show me how the pilot light worked. When she bent over the stove I clipped her with the knucks.

I pulled her away from the stove and opened the oven door. I fixed her so it looked like she'd stuck her head in the oven and kept it there till the gas got her, and then fallen down. The fall would explain the marks the knucks left.

I sat down and smoked another reefer. I took my time, looking around to be sure I hadn't forgotten anything.

She lay there breathing evenly.

I got up and put my coat on. Then I closed the windows, turned the gas on, and went out.

Gus Ryan was a college football-player. He was about 22, Irish, had

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blond hair, and a build like a professional wrestler. During the next two weeks I took him around to the high spots with Virginia and one of her friends. I made a point of going to the places where I could spend plenty of money. I wanted him to see what it was like, being in the dough. I also wanted him to have some good times on me.

One night I took Virginia and her friend home early and then started working on him. I drove slow toward the college so I'd have plenty of time.

"Where do you come from, Ryan?"

"Pennsylvania. A little town called LeFevre. Why?"

"I was just wondering."

"I was born and raised there. My old man was a miner."

"Worked hard, huh?"

"Yeah."

"And died broke probably."

"Yeah. Ma nearly went crazy. That's how come I'm going to college. None of that hard work, no pay for me. I'm going to make real money."

"You're right, Ryan."

"That's why I'm in New York. That's where the money is."

"Right again. You're a smart guy."

"I could've gone anywhere. They all wanted me. Notre Dame, Colgate, Dartmouth, all of them. But not me. You can't play football all your life. When I get through college I'm going to be right here where the money is. With connections. I've got a soft spot already picked out."

"Yeah. What's that?"

"Selling bonds."

I almost laughed out loud.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Only for a minute you had me thinking you were smart."

"What's wrong with selling bonds?"

"Nothing, if you don't mind waiting till you're too old to spend it."

"I don't mind waiting."

"Don't worry. You will."

"All right. What would you do?"

"I'd go after the easy money, and get it, the same as I'm doing now."

"Some day you'll get it in the neck, too."

"Say, do you know what I'm doing now?"

"Sure. Virginia told me."

"Well, I'll be damned."

"You don't have to worry. It doesn't make any difference to me."

"I'm not worrying. I'm surprised you never said anything about it."

"Why should I? It's none of my business."

I thought that over.

"You think that's the way Virginia looks at it?"

"I don't know. Maybe she thinks you're sort of romantic or something."

"So you think I'll get it in the neck?"

"Well, sooner or later."

"Sooner or later they all do. That what you mean?"

"Yeah."

"That's where you're wrong. They all do unless they get protection."

"Some that get protection do, too."

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"Not the ones that play it smart. I got it figured out. The ones with protection always get it after elections. It's politics. When a political party comes into office it's got to clean up after the one that's been in before. They arrest a lot of guys and make it look good, but they don't touch the rackets. The rackets stay. Only new guys run them."

"Yeah, but . . ."

"This outfit in office cleaned up after the one before it, but you don't think that's stopped them from getting theirs, do you? You don't see me having any trouble, do you?"

"No."

"All right, then, it's simple. All you've got to do is make your killing under one administration and get out before the next one comes in. That's the way I'm going to do it. I've got a plan that'll make me a quarter of a million dollars before the end of next year."

"That's a lot of money."

"You bet your sweet life it is."

I let him think about it.

"You know why I'm telling you this, Ryan?"

"No."

"I like you. You're smart. I'm going to cut you in."

"Wait a minute. I don't want in."

"Sure you do. You just haven't thought it over."

"I don't need to think it over."

"Wait till you hear my proposition."

"I don't want to hear it. I've got better sense."

"Look, Ryan, a year from now you'd be sitting on top of the world. You and fifty thousand dollars. Think of it. Most guys your age'll just be starting out then, grubbing for dimes."

"Not me."

"Okay, Ryan. Forget it."

Virginia was in my room.

"You love me, Carl?"

"Sure."

"You never say so."

"Sure I do."

"I always have to ask you first."

"I'd say so if you didn't ask me."

"You don't tell me I'm pretty or say nice things to me. You haven't even asked me about myself."

"I don't need to. You're all right with me the way you are."

"Aren't you curious about me?"

"No."

"Not even a teeny bit?"

"No."

"Not even a teeny weeny bit?"

I had to laugh. She was a screwball, all right.

"Sure I'm curious. I was kidding you."

"Go ahead and ask me then."

"Okay. Tell me about yourself."

"Not like that, silly. Ask me what you want to know. Where I came from. Who my people are. Things like that."

"All right. Who are your people?"

"Daddy's an engineer. He's with an oil company in Venezuela."

"And your mother's with him."

"Yes."

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"And that's that."

"I hate you."

She lay there a while. Then she sat up on her elbow.

"Carl."

"Yeah?"

"Let's get married."

"You don't want to marry me, Virginia. Supposing your old man asked you what my business was. What would you tell him? You couldn't say you'd married a crook."

"You aren't a crook. Don't say that."

"I don't like it, but that's what I am."

"You don't have to be. You can do anything you want to. You've got brains."

"I've got brains all right, but I can't do anything with them. The only way I can get out of this racket is with a stake, so I can go into business for myself."

"Do it. You would if you loved me."

"I would. I'd do it in a minute if it wasn't for Ryan."

"Ryan?"

"Gus Ryan. I could get a stake together if I could get him to help me. It'd take a year, maybe, but I'd get it."

"I don't see how he could help you."

"I've got a scheme. I've thought about getting out with a stake before. I could do it with Ryan helping me. But he isn't interested."

"Does it have to be him?"

"Him or somebody like him. I might be able to get him if you'd help me."

"Of course I'll help you, darling."

"You want to do me a favor, Ryan?"

"Sure. Anything I can."

We were at the Boat Club, sitting at a table. Virginia and a girl named Sylvia were with us. We'd had dinner and a couple of drinks.

"Drive downtown and get a package for me. I promised I'd pick it up for the guy that runs this place, but I forgot to do it. You can take my car."

"Okay. You want me to do it now?"

"Yeah."

I wrote Joe's address on a piece of paper.

"It's at a pool hall. Just ask for Joe Busby. He'll know what you want."

"Joe Busby. Right."

I handed him the key to the car.

"Maybe Sylvia'd like to go."

"I'd love to," she said.

When they were gone I wrote a note.

Dear Gus:

Something important came up and I had to leave. Give the guy that runs this place the package you got for me and he'll give you enough money to show the girls a good time. I'll be back at my hotel around two. Keep the car till then. *Carl*

I went to the movies. Then I had a couple of beers and at two o'clock

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went back to the hotel. If everything went right he'd be there waiting for me. If it didn't I was out a C note. It cost me that to fix the headwaiter at the Corners Club.

He was waiting in the lobby all right, looking worried.

When he saw me come in he got up and hurried over to meet me. He had a sheepish grin on his face.

"Man, am I glad to see you!"

"Why? What's the matter?"

"I got in a little trouble. I took the girls to a night club and the bill was more than I had. I had to leave them there."

I laughed and reached for my wallet.

"How much do you need?"

"Eighty-five dollars."

"Eighty-five dollars! Say, what do you think I am? I gave you a hundred already tonight, Ryan."

"I know it, but . . ."

I put my wallet back in my pocket.

"I can't do it. I'd like to, but I haven't got it."

His face fell.

"Any other time I could, but right now I'm short myself. I've got to make a trip out of town tomorrow and I'll need every cent I've got."

His face fell even more.

"All right. Come on out in the car. Maybe we can figure something out."

"I could give it to you if I didn't have to go out of town tomorrow. But I've got to pay a guy to take care of my business while I'm gone. See how it is, Ryan?"

"Yeah."

"If it wasn't that I have to pay him in advance I could give it to you and then some. What's more, I'd be glad to."

"I know you would. You've given me plenty already. I'm not blaming you. It was my fault going to a place like that. It was Virginia's idea."

"What kind of a place was it?"

"Well, it looked sort of expensive. But I didn't have any idea it was going to be like that."

"That's tough."

"It wouldn't be so bad if the girls weren't still there. That's what worries me."

"Yeah. We've got to do something about that."

I helped him worry a while.

"Couldn't you call up the fellow that's going to take care of your business and ask him to wait for his money?"

"Yeah. I could do that. I don't know, though. It's pretty late. He might get sore."

"Why don't you try. It might work."

"Okay."

I got out of the car and went in the hotel. I waited a few minutes and then went back.

"No sale. He won't do it."

"Blast it."

I got in the car.

"That's the trouble in this business. Everything's cash on the line."

"Couldn't you get somebody else? Someone you wouldn't have to pay in advance?"

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"Who could I get? I've got to have somebody I can trust."

"Yeah. I can see that."

We sat there a while. Finally, he began to get the idea.

"Supposing I did it. I'm not saying I will. But supposing I did. What would I have to do?"

"Nothing much. Deliver a few packages. Collect some money. That's all."

"Is there any danger?"

"I wouldn't let you do it if there was. All you'd have to do is deliver a couple of packages like the one you did tonight."

"Say. Is that what that package was?"

"Yeah. I'm sorry about that, Ryan. I was going after it myself, but when that phone call I was waiting for didn't come through I had to leave. And there wasn't anybody I could send after the package but you. I knew there wouldn't be any trouble. There never is."

"Is that all I'd have to do? Deliver packages like that?"

"Yeah."

He looked relieved.

I took my wallet out.

"I'll be gone about a week. I'll pay you just what I'd have to pay the other guy. Three hundred dollars."

"You don't have to do that."

"I want you to take it. I'd have to give it to the other guy, and anyway I've got a guilty conscience about sending you after that package."

"That's all right."

He took the money and put it in his pocket.

Toward the end of the week Virginia came up to see me.

"Did you miss me, Carl?"

"Sure."

"Much?"

"Yeah."

"I wish you'd said so."

"I missed you a lot, Virginia."

She kissed me.

"You're so cute, honey."

She was always talking like that. But it wasn't so bad when you'd had a couple of sticks.

"How'd you make out with Ryan?"

She was seeing to it that he spent his money. I'd told him I wanted her to have a good time while I was gone.

"We've been out every night this week. He tips like a millionaire now."

"Good."

"I think he's beginning to fall for Sylvia, too."

Sylvia was a little trick I'd had her pick out of the school for him. They were taking her along with them. She was about eighteen with dark hair and a nice shape. The thing about her was that her old man was rich. That was what Ryan needed. Someone who'd have to have plenty of money to fool around with.

"Isn't it thrilling, honey?" Virginia said. "It's just like in the movies."

Ryan came into my room looking like he'd stepped out of a hair-tonic ad. He had on a new suit, new shoes,

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and a new hat. There was a grin on his face.

"Hi yah, Carl. How's everything?"

"So-so. How'd you make out while I was gone?"

"Swell. No trouble at all."

"I told you it'd be that way."

"There wasn't anything to it. It was simple."

"That's what I told you, wasn't it, Ryan?"

"Yeah."

He stood there, grinning at me.

"Well, thanks, Ryan," I said.

"That's all right. We're even. You paid me enough."

"That wasn't anything."

"To me it was."

"Well, forget it."

"Anyway, I wanted to thank you."

"You don't owe me anything."

"Look, Carl. I've been thinking it over. I might be interested in that proposition you were telling me about, after all."

"Attaboy, Ryan. Now you're using your head."

"Did you mean it when you said I could make fifty thousand dollars?"

"Sure. Maybe more."

I saw Joe that night.

"Okay, Joe. It's all set. All you've got to do now is give me the connection."

"Good."

"You'll be rid of me in a week if I fix it."

"You'll fix it. I've already told him you're okay."

"That was big of you. I want to thank you for the fatherly interest you're taking."

He let it pass. He was so pleased at the idea of getting rid of me he didn't know whether he was coming or going.

Henry McAdams, the connection, was a bald-headed guy with black-rimmed glasses and a neat gray suit. I met him in Joe's stock room.

I told him as much as I figured he needed to know. I planned to open a pad, and I had to have protection from him as well as reefers.

"I'll think it over," he said.

"Okay. Let me know this week what you decide."

"You'll know."

"And whatever you decide don't mention it to Joe."

He took his glasses off and looked at me.

One reason I wanted Ryan working for me was that I needed him. Another was I wanted to have plenty of time to keep on working for Joe. I'd told Joe he was going to be rid of me in a week and I'd meant it, then. But after I'd thought it over I'd decided against it. Why pass up a bird in the hand for two in the bush when you can have all three?

I let Joe in on it at the end of the week.

He was sitting at his desk in the stock room when I went in. For the first time since I horned in on him he looked like he was glad to see me. He even offered me a cigar. I took it

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and put it in my pocket. This was going to be funny.

"Sit down, Carl," he said. "Take the load off of your feet."

"Thanks, Joe."

I sat down.

"How's everything?"

"Not so hot."

"That so? Too bad."

He lit his cigar and grinned at me.

"Well, I've been selling you to McAdams."

"Yeah?"

"Sure. Every time I see him."

"He say anything to you?"

"To me? Not him. You know how guys like that are. Tight-lipped."

"Yeah. I know."

"Ain't you heard from him?"

"Yeah. I heard."

"Well, what'd I tell you?"

He was grinning like he'd laid an egg or something.

"You sold me to him, all right."

"Huh?"

"Yeah. He won't have anything to do with me. He turned the proposition down cold."

Joe's grin sunk like a ton of lead.

I got up and went over to his desk.

"I ought to pin your ears back for you. You talked me right out of the money with that big mouth of yours."

I picked the cigar boxes up. He started to say something, but I beat him to it.

"The only reason I'm not going to do it is that I've got a better idea. I'm going to keep on working for you and make you pay through the nose. From now on it'll cost you double every time I deliver these things for you. And I'm going to keep on delivering them for you as long as you're in business."

His face was purple now.

"That'll teach you to keep your big mouth shut."

I turned around and walked out. I had to, to keep from laughing in his face. As it was I nearly busted a gut when I got outside. I was still laughing that night when I finished delivering.

But when I got up to my room I stopped.

There was a cop waiting for me inside.

My first thought was that they'd found out about Jean. My second thought was to run for it. But he was sitting in a chair looking at me down the barrel of his pistol. He was wiping it with his handkerchief.

"Come in, Sanders. I've been waiting for you."

He was a big guy with a deep bass voice and an over-fed look. His uniform was unbuttoned at the throat and his cop's hat was pushed back on his head. His holster lay on the table and beside it was a glass of my Scotch. There were plenty of brass buttons on his chest.

"You want to see me?" I asked.

"You're Sanders, aren't you?"

"Yeah."

"I'm a friend of Henry McAdams."

I wiped the sweat off my forehead.

"Am I glad to hear that."

He let out a laugh.

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"Got a bad conscience, huh?"

I went over and poured myself a drink.

"What's on your mind?" I asked him.

"McAdams tells me you're going in business in my district."

"That's right."

"Well, go ahead."

He put his pistol in his holster and stood up to put it on. Then he started buttoning his uniform.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Who's going to pay who?"

"You're paying me. I'll drop in on you and see how you're doing."

"How'll you know where it is?"

"I'll know. Don't worry about that."

"That's more than I do. I haven't looked around yet."

"What kind of place you want?"

I told him. He gave me a couple of addresses where there were empty lofts.

I took Joe's cigar out of my pocket.

"Smoke?"

"Thanks," he said. "So long."

I lit up, and went to bed.

Reefers are funny things. You can't ever be sure what kind of a kick you'll get from them. *

That night when I lit up and got in bed I was in Jean's apartment — in the kitchen.

Jean lay on the floor where I'd left her. The gas was still on. I turned it off and gave her a shove with my foot. She rolled over, then sat up.

Her face was as ugly as ever.

"What's the matter, honey?" she asked.

"Get up. You've been lying there long enough."

She rubbed her jaw.

"Somebody hit me."

"Yeah. Me."

"Why?"

"You put that ugly face of yours too close to me."

She started to cry.

"Shut up and get up off of the floor."

She got up, rubbing her jaw.

"I smell gas."

"I just turned it off."

"Honey, what happened?"

"Nothing."

I followed her in the other room. She went over to the mirror and started powdering her face. She powdered the scarred places two or three times, trying to hide them.

I laughed at her.

"It hasn't done your looks any good."

She whirled around and looked at me.

"What hasn't done my looks any good?"

"Being dead."

"You're crazy."

"That's what you think. You've been dead two months. You've always been dead from the neck up, but this time you were dead all over."

* A person with a mental predisposition of one kind or another is almost certain to react to marihuana in terms of his predisposition. Carl's reaction in this story is a case in point.

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"You're crazy, honey. You've been drinking."

"Have I? Get your hat and coat and I'll show you whether I've been drinking or not."

"I won't. It's too silly."

"We'll see how silly it is. Get your hat and coat."

I made her get them. Then I made her come with me outside. I hailed a cab.

While we were waiting for it I looked across the street and saw an old house that had an iron gate in front of it. On the gate's spikes were six brass knobs. I counted them and made up my mind to remember them in case I ever wanted to check up on what was happening. An old house with an iron gate and six brass knobs. I counted them four times before I told the driver to go uptown to my hotel.

In my room I showed her the newspaper clipping about her being dead. She read it and got a funny look on her face. I sat there and laughed at her. Then I went to bed.

The next day I woke up with a big appetite.

Virginia helped fix up the first pad. She picked out the tables and chairs, bought curtains for the windows, and cleaned the place up. We put the tables against the walls and left an open space in the center of the room. In the middle of the open space, where everybody could see it, was the phonograph. At a quarter a throw I counted on making plenty off of that.

The room was a heated loft about sixty feet long and twenty feet wide. The building it was in was almost empty. The landlord wasn't curious.

It couldn't have been a sweeter set-up.

The furniture was second-hand, the machine was on percentage, the tea was pay as you go, and the rent was eighty a month. The whole works cost less than two hundred dollars. At that price I couldn't lose.

I took Virginia back to the school around six o'clock. At nine she was back with as many of her friends as she could bring.

The evening started off slow. Ryan's friends sat on one side of the room and Virginia's on the other.

Then the place began to get smoked up.

Pretty soon they were jabbering like a bunch of monkeys. I put a quarter in the machine to start things off, and after that my worries were over. They began to pair off to dance and before the night was over some of them left together. The rest stayed on and fed the machine and Ryan fed them tea. The place got so smoky you could get a jag on just breathing. The noise was terrific.

The question was would they come back and bring their friends.

They would.

In less than a month the place was a hangout where girls came in twos and threes and schoolboys came in droves.

Before the year was out we had three pads going.

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I stayed away from them once they got going good. But it took several months and during that time I inhaled enough reefer smoke to lift a dirigible. Jean kept coming back.

But my bankroll was getting fat.

I had over forty thousand dollars in the bank.

I thought about it lying in bed in my room. Two years ago I was bumming dimes for coffee and now I had more money than most guys make in ten years.

On the chair beside my bed was a black bag with nearly two thousand dollars in it. Ryan brought it in that morning. And it was going to be that way from now on, two thousand a week and more.

I was in the money, all right.

I lit up and thought about it.

Things went along fine for a while. Then Ryan got the bright idea he wasn't making enough money. He finally figured out that fifty-two times a hundred dollars made fifty-two hundred dollars, not fifty thousand. The dumb cluck actually thought he was going to make that much.

One morning he came up to my room with nearly three thousand dollars. I counted the money out on my bed. Then I handed him his hundred.

"I've been thinking it over, Carl. We're doing a good business now and I ought to get more."

"Okay, Ryan. How about a hundred and ten?"

"I mean a lot more."

"A hundred and twenty then?"

"You don't see what I mean. I mean a lot more. You told me I was going to make fifty thousand dollars."

"Yeah. And you are, Ryan. But you've got to wait till we get on a solid footing."

"We're on a solid footing now. We're making two to three thousand dollars every week."

"No, we aren't. I know it looks that way, but you don't know what we're paying for reefers. The more we make, the more the guy I get them from wants. Why, some weeks he gets so much we don't even clear expenses."

"I don't believe that. We take in enough on the machines to pay for them."

We took in enough and then some.

"You're wrong, Ryan. We take in enough but three-quarters of it goes back to the company that owns them. They want more on account of the business we're in."

"That sounds fishy to me. I think you're stringing me along."

"I wouldn't do that, Ryan. I like you. You and I are going to get rich together. But you've got to trust me, the same as I do you."

I was trusting him about as far as I could throw a piano. The only time I trusted him was when somebody's neck had to be stuck out. His was built for it.

He kept standing there.

"I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you a hundred and twenty-five a

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week and when things pick up I'll give you more. How's that?"

He didn't answer. He took the money and left.

I lit up. Then I got up and unlocked the bathroom door.

Jean came out.

"Beat it," I told her. "I don't want you around."

"Don't make me go, honey."

"Go on. You're getting in my hair."

"Aw, honey. Please."

"Go on. Beat it before I get sore."

"I want more money, Carl. I'm doing all the work, taking all the risks, and all I'm getting for it is pin money."

"You don't call a hundred and twenty-five a week pin money, do you? That's more than you ever made in your life before."

"That hasn't anything to do with it. You told me I was going to make fifty thousand dollars and that's what I expect to get."

"I can't give it to you now. We aren't making enough. And you can get the idea you're taking any risks out of your head. You've got perfect protection and you know it."

"I don't give a rap about that. I want more money."

"Ryan, for a guy that didn't have a pretzel to his name a few months ago you've got some funny ideas about money. Why, I can remember back when you didn't have a tailored suit or a single monogrammed shirt. I can even remember the guy that gave you a break so you could get yourself a fancy wardrobe."

"I remember when you made a crook out of me, too."

"That's a hot one. I didn't know your conscience was bothering you."

He grinned.

"At a hundred and twenty-five a week my conscience bothers me plenty."

I laughed. He tried to keep from it but he couldn't. He laughed too.

About that time Joe found out I'd put one over on him. He was plenty sore that night when I went in. He was sitting at his desk with a chewed-up cigar in his mouth.

"Carl, you told me you'd quit clipping me when you got your own business. And today I find out you've had it for months and ain't even told me about it. Me, the guy that fixed it so you could get it. If that ain't a double-cross I don't know one."

"You know one, all right. You've doublecrossed everybody in town."

"Well, you ain't going to get away with it. I'll tell you that right now. I ain't going to stand for it."

"You ain't, ain't you? Now ain't that too bad?"

"Don't get wise with me. I ain't as dumb as you think. You and me are through. Beginning now."

"You and me aren't through and aren't going to be. I'm going right on delivering for you as long as you're dumb enough to keep on chiseling the cops. You can get that through your thick skull right now."

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"You ain't going to get away with it. I'll get you for it if it's the last thing I do."

"It'll be the last thing you do, all right."

When Ryan came in the next day I knew Joe had got to him.

"This is your last chance to play ball with me, Carl. Either you cut me in on the money we're making or I'm through."

"You're in on it now. You're getting more than I am."

"You can't hand me that any more. You're not going to doublecross me the way you're doing everybody else."

"You've been talking to somebody, huh?"

"Yeah. Your pal, Busby. But that doesn't make any difference. I'd have had a showdown with you, anyway."

"I'll tell you something, Ryan. I've been playing fair with you. I'll admit I put one over on Joe, but that was so I could pay you more."

"I don't believe it. I know what we're making. Two to three thousand dollars every week. And from now on I want my share of it. A thousand a week — the way you promised me."

"I can't give it to you."

"Okay. I've got a few ideas about this business myself."

"Planning a little competition?"

"Yeah."

"Well, just to save you some trouble I'll tell you something. There's only one guy in town that can furnish enough tea for it. And you can't get to him. How do you like that?"

"We'll see whether I can get to him or not."

"Okay. You see. And when you get through come back and maybe I'll give you your job back."

A couple of hours later McAdams called up.

"What's going on down there, Sanders?"

"Why?"

"Your boy Ryan's up here trying to make a deal with me."

"I was expecting that. Send him home."

"What's the trouble?"

"No trouble. He's just got some big ideas."

"All right. But watch yourself. I told you I didn't want anybody to know you were connected with me."

"Joe put him wise."

I got out my brass knucks. Then I lit a stick . . .

"Now, listen, Jean. You've got to quit pestering me. Ryan's coming back in a few minutes and I don't want you hanging around."

"I won't bother you, honey. I won't say a word."

"You're bothering me now. You're always bothering me. Listen, if anybody told me they didn't want me around I'd go away and never come back."

"I would, too, honey. But I know you don't mean it."

"I mean it, all right. If you wanted

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to make me happy you'd go off and drown yourself."

"You're just saying that."

"Well, maybe I am," I said. "Come here a minute."

She came over. I swung at her and missed. She screamed. I swung at her again. She screamed again. She started running from me, screaming . . .

I was still trying to catch her when Ryan came in. He didn't knock.

"You get out of here," I told her.

"Don't make me go, honey. I haven't any place to go to."

"You've got your apartment. Go on now, beat it."

"I haven't got my apartment any more. Somebody rented it."

"Don't hand me that. Just beat it."

I kicked her as she passed me.

Ryan stood there looking at me.

"What do you want?" I asked him.

"Nothing now. Not a thing."

He grinned as he walked out.

That night Jean was waiting for me in the car.

"What do you want now? I told you to beat it three hours ago."

"Don't make me leave, honey. You need me. You're in trouble."

"I'll show you how I need you."

I got in the car and tried to kick her out. She wouldn't budge. I slapped her. She started crying.

A guy stopped on the sidewalk and looked at me.

"All right," I told her. "Be quiet. You can stay."

She quit crying.

"Now, listen. I've got something important to do. You can come along but you've got to stay in the car. You'll queer the whole thing if you don't. Understand?"

"All right, honey."

She blew her nose.

Joe was sitting in the stock room when I went in. I got halfway over to his desk when I heard the door open behind me. I turned around. It was Jean.

"Damn it, I told you to stay in the car."

"Honey, don't make me go. I won't bother you."

I grabbed her wrist and kicked her. I slapped her a couple of times and hustled her out. Going down the steps, I slapped her again. Outside I gave her a kick that sent her sprawling.

She got up, crying, and started down the street.

"I only wanted to help you," she said, looking back.

When she was out of sight I went back up to the stock room. Joe was telephoning. He hung up when he saw me.

"Where's the stuff?" I asked him.

"Stuff, Carl? What stuff?"

"You know what stuff. Don't get wise with me."

"I forgot to tell you. I decided to deliver it myself."

"You did, did you?"

"Yeah. I won't be needing your help any longer."

"Okay. If it's trouble you want I'll give it to you."

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"Trouble, Carly? I don't know what you mean."

"You'll know what I mean, all right. There'll be a cop here in ten minutes. One of the cops you've been chiseling."

I started toward the door.

"Wait a minute, Carl. Who was that you were talking to a minute ago?"

"You saw her?"

"Sure. A good-looking blonde, wasn't she?"

"What're you trying to hand me?"

"Nothing. Only if I was you I wouldn't get too close to any cops."

"Yeah? Why?"

"They might lock you up."

"What gives you that idea?"

"You, Carly. You're hipped on hay."

"Don't make me laugh."

"Okay, Carly. You go on downstairs. There'll be a squad car out front waiting for you."

"You can't hand me that simple stuff."

"I ain't handing you anything. I called the cops when you went out of here talking to yourself. I told them there was a tea head up here accusing me of selling reefers. You try and tell them different."

"I'll do that little thing."

"Before you try it you'd better take a look at your eyes."

"What's wrong with my eyes?"

"They're seeing things that ain't. Besides that they're loaded. Marihuana's oozing out of them."

"You can't kid me. I know what's wrong with my eyes. I need a little sleep, that's all."

"That's what you think."

"Don't be a chump, Joe. You've handed the cops a cock-and-bull story but that doesn't mean anything. My eyes may be a little bloodshot today, but they won't be tomorrow."

"Okay, Carly. See them tomorrow."

He sat there grinning at me.

"Don't think you can kid me into believing I'm seeing things. If I'd had too many reefers you wouldn't be telling me about it. You'd be handing me more."

He laughed.

"I don't have to hand you more. You'll get them as long as you get kicks out of them. And when you don't any more, you'll get something stronger. I've seen guys like you before."

"Yeah? Then what're you trying to keep me from seeing the cops for?"

He didn't answer. He just sat there and laughed.

I went downstairs and looked around. There was a squad car at the corner. I got in my car and drove off.

The next morning I got a phone call from McAdams.

"What's wrong with you, Sanders?"

"Me? Nothing."

"I heard different."

"Okay. Come down and see for yourself."

"I'll tell you how it is, McAdams. I outsmarted Joe on a deal, and he's

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been making trouble for me ever since. And Ryan's sore because he thinks he isn't getting paid enough. They're both trying to frame me."

"Yeah?"

"Sure. Look at me. Do I look like a guy that's crazy? Do I run my business that way?"

"I don't know. You run your business okay and Ryan's sore all right, but I'm not so sure about Joe. He wouldn't be sticking his neck out. And you don't look too good to me."

"I just need some sleep."

"I don't know, Sanders. I don't want any trouble."

"All right, Mac. Leave it to me."

Jean came out of the bathroom, smiling.

"I knew you'd fix it, honey," she said. "You're so smart."

I looked at McAdams. He didn't say anything.

"Beat it, Jean. I don't want you in here," I said.

"Who is it?" McAdams asked.

"This is Jean Smith," I said.

"I'm pleased to meet you," Jean said.

McAdams didn't say anything.

"Okay. Now beat it," I told her.

She went back in the bathroom.

"I don't see anybody," McAdams said.

"She went in the bathroom."

"Who was it?"

"A friend of mine."

"Tell her to come back. I want to see what she looks like."

Jean opened the door.

"Here I am," she said.

"I don't see anybody," McAdams said. "Where is she?"

"Right there in front of you."

"There's nobody here, Sanders."

I looked at him. Now I knew what it was all about. He was trying to frame me. He was trying to make me think I was nuts so he could use that as an excuse to grab my business. Joe and Ryan were in it with him. Well, they weren't going to get away with it. Nobody could pull a dumb trick like that on me.

"You're right, McAdams," I said. "I was kidding. There isn't anybody here."

"I'm here, honey," Jean said. "Don't you see me?"

"Shut up," I told her.

"What did you say?" McAdams asked.

"I said you were right. There's nobody here."

"Oh," he said.

"I'm here," Jean said.

"Damn it, shut up!" I said.

"Hey, you can't talk to me like that," McAdams said.

"I wasn't talking to you," I said.

"Who were you talking to?"

"Nobody."

"Then why tell them to shut up?"

He got up and went over to the door.

"You're off your nut, Sanders. I'm cutting you out."

Then he was gone.

Jean ran out behind him.

Virginia came in about an hour later. We smoked a couple of sticks.

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"Where were you last night, honey?"

"Why?"

"I came by to see you."

"I was out on business."

"You've been out a lot lately."

"Yeah. I've been having trouble."

"It must be keeping you up late."

"What makes you say that?"

"Your eyes are all bloodshot."

"Yeah?"

I heard a door opening. I sat up.

"What is it?" Virginia asked.

"Someone's in the other room."

"How do you know?"

"I heard them come in."

"I didn't hear anything."

She looked at me with a funny expression on her face. She was still looking at me when Jean came in.

Jean took it in in one second. She started for Virginia with her fingernails. I jumped out of bed and tackled her in the middle of the room. She went down without a word and lay quiet on the floor. A trickle of blood oozed out of her mouth.

Virginia screamed and ran for her coat.

I carried Jean in the bathroom and laid her in the tub. I turned the water on and waited till it was over her head. Then I went in the other room.

Virginia had a wild look in her eyes. She ran to the other side of the room.

"Take it easy," I told her.

I started toward her.

"Stay away from me."

She was trembling.

"Take it easy. Nothing's going to happen to you."

"Let me out of here."

I was standing in front of the door.

"You'll get out. Just quiet down first."

"I want to get out now."

I went over and slapped her. She started crying. I sat her down in a chair and let her get it out of her system.

"Nobody's going to bother you, Virginia. All I want you to do is quiet down so you won't get in trouble talking."

"I'm not going to get in any trouble. I haven't anything to talk about."

"That's right. That's good."

"Let me out now."

"I'll let you out in a minute. Take it easy."

She looked at the door like she was going to run for it.

"I had to get her, Virginia. She'd have killed you if I didn't."

"All right, honey. Anything you say. Let me go now."

"Not till you know what you're saying."

"I know what I'm saying. I don't know why you're so worried. I haven't anything to talk about."

"Didn't you see what happened?"

"No."

"Then what're you so scared about?"

"It was you, honey. All of a sudden you dived down on the floor and rolled around like a crazy man. Then you got up and walked out of the room like you were carrying something heavy. And you had such a funny look in your eyes."

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"Didn't you see who came in here?"

"No. Who?"

"Didn't you see what I did to her?"

"I was too scared."

"You're lying. You're in with McAdams and Ryan, trying to frame me. They got to you, somehow."

"I don't know what you're talking about."

I grabbed her hand and pulled her into the bathroom. I pointed to the tub. Jean lay in it under water. Her eyes were open and blood was running out of her mouth.

"That's what I'm talking about."

Virginia looked in the tub. Then she looked at me. Then she began to scream.

"Shut up."

She kept on screaming.

I let her have one on the chin.

She dropped down to the floor and, at the same time, the hotel manager opened the door in the other room. I took one look at him and started running. I dodged him and was almost out of the room when I ran into the house dick.

I was getting away from the dick when I heard the splash. I turned around.

Jean was crawling out of the bathtub. She stood up, dripping, and started toward me. Blood and water spilled from her mouth. Her face was white.

My legs sank into the floor . . .

When I woke up I was in Bellevue. I've been here ever since. They claim they're holding me for observation, but I know I've been framed. They've thrown me in here to shut me up. They knew if they took me into court I'd talk about the tea set-up and drag half the city's cops into it. So they've thrown me in here instead.

They've got me in a two-by-four cubbyhole with barred windows and a steel door. A gnat couldn't get out.

They send a doctor in every day to try and convince me I'm nuts. They've tried everything they know, but I'm not biting. If I admitted it they could lock me up forever. That's what they want.

That's why they keep telling me there's nobody in here with me. They want to drive me nuts so they can lock me up for good. But I know I'm okay and I know they know it.

Jean knows it, too. That's why they've locked her in here with me.

NEW YORK, N. Y., FEB. 1. — A city-wide crackdown on suspects in a new narcotics ring was announced today by a spokesman for Police Headquarters who said that the ring, operating in three neighborhoods, sold hundreds of pounds of marihuana to youngsters seeking thrills.

Announcing the arrest and detention of six principals in the sensational case, Police Headquarters at the same time issued a statement scoring parents for their laxity in guarding their children and roundly denounced "criminals who prey on the gullibility of teen-agers."

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Among the spectacular disclosures made public by the police in the case today were these:

A patrolman, John Hinkle, 42, of Brooklyn, whose beat included one of the neighborhoods in which the ring operated, was arrested and suspended from the department pending investigation of charges against him. Police said that other members of the force were involved and further arrests would be made shortly.

A student at one of New York's swankiest finishing schools, 18-year-old Virginia Stevens, was balked in a suicide attempt at Police Headquarters last night after confessing her part in the ring's activities. Police described Miss Stevens as a "decoy" who had been used to lure other teenagers into the ring's clutches.

A college football star was seized on campus last night and placed under arrest after police learned of his part in the ring's operations. The student broke down and began to sob when confronted with evidence of his complicity in the case, police said. His name and full details will be released later in the day when questioning is complete.

A murder charge will be lodged against Carl Sanders, 32, described by police as one of the leaders in the ring's activities, on his release from Bellevue Hospital where he is currently a mental patient. They said they had evidence linking Sanders to the death under suspicious circumstances last year of Jean Smith.

Ironically, the first break in the case came two days ago when James Nelson, an intern at Bellevue Hospital, became suspicious of Sanders' "wild talk" while under observation, and notified police. Investigating detectives learned that Miss Stevens had been in Sanders' company at the time of his commitment to Bellevue, and brought her in for questioning. Miss Stevens quickly broke down and told police what she knew. The other arrests followed.

Also under arrest are Henry McAdams, 56, of 112½ Van Ness Place, and Joe Busby, 50, who operates a pool hall at the corner of Third Avenue and Greenwich Street. Police said that Busby sold "reefer" cigarettes on a wholesale scale to scores of peddlers who in turn "pushed" them at prices ranging from fifty cents each to two dollars, depending on what the traffic would bear. They described McAdams as a "big time" catch, a major supplier who dumped hundreds of pounds of marihuana into the city monthly, and whose sources of supply are now under investigation. Federal officials are expected to intervene in this and other aspects of the case. Both McAdams and Busby are said to be talking freely. It was Busby who volunteered information which led to the investigation of the death of Miss Smith, and the subsequent implication of Sanders. As the result of further disclosures by the two men, police are engaged in a general roundup of violators in all parts of the city . . .

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WHO KILLED BAKER?

by EDMUND CRISPIN and GEOFFREY BUSH

WAKEFIELD WAS ATTENDING A series of philosophy lectures at London University, and for the past ten minutes his fellow-guests at Haldane's had been mutely enduring a *précis* of the lecturer's main contentions.

"What it amounts to, then," said Wakefield, towards what they hoped was the close of his peroration, "is that philosophy deals not so much with the answers to questions about Man and the Universe as with the problem of *what questions may properly be asked.* Improper questions" — here a little man named Fielding, whom no one knew very well, choked suddenly over his port and had to be led out — "improper questions can only confuse the issue. And it's this aspect of philosophy which in my opinion defines its superiority to other studies, such as — such as" — Wakefield's eye lighted on Gervase Fen, who was stolidly cracking walnuts opposite — "such as, well, criminology, for instance."

Fen roused himself.

"Improper questions," he said reflectively. "I remember a case which illustrates very clearly how —"

"Defines," Wakefield repeated at a higher pitch, "its superiority to —"

But at this point, Haldane, perceiving that much more of Wakefield on epistemology would certainly bring the party to a premature end, contrived adroitly to upset his port into Wakefield's lap, and in the melee which ensued it proved possible to detach the conversational initiative from Wakefield and confer it on Fen.

"*Who killed Baker?*" With this rather abrupt query Fen established a foothold while Wakefield was still scrubbing ineffectually at his damp trousers with a handkerchief. "The situation which resulted in Baker's death wasn't in itself specially complicated or obscure, and in consequence the case was solved readily enough."

"Yes, it would be, of course," said Wakefield sourly, "if you were solving it."

"Oh, but I wasn't." Fen shook his head decisively, and Wakefield, shifting about uncomfortably in the effort to remove wet barathea from contact with his skin, glowered at him. "The case was solved by a very able Detective-Inspector of the County C.I.D., by name Casby, and it was from him that I heard of it, quite recently, while we were investigating the death of that Swiss schoolmaster at Cotten Abbas. As nearly as I can, I'll tell it to you the way he told me. And I ought to warn you in advance that it's a case in which the mode of telling is important — as important, probably, as the thing told. . . .

"At the time of his death Baker was about forty-five, a self-important

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little man with very black, heavily-brilliantined hair, an incipient paunch, dandified clothes, and a twisted bruiser's nose which was the consequence not of pugnacity but of a fall from a bicycle in youth. He was not, one gathers, at all a pleasing personality, and he had crowned his dislikeable qualities by marrying, and subsequently bullying, a wife very much younger and more attractive than himself. For a reason which the sequel will make obvious, there's not much evidence as to the form this bullying took, but it was real enough — no question about that — and three years of it drove the wretched woman, more for consolation than for passion, into the arms of the chauffeur, a gloomy, sallow young man named Arnold Snow. Since Snow had never read D. H. Lawrence, his chief emotion in the face of Mary Baker's advances was simple surprise, and to do him justice he seems never to have made the smallest attempt to capitalize his position in any of the obvious ways. But, of course, the neighbors talked; there are precedents enough for such a relationship's ending in disaster."

Haldane nodded. "Rattenbury," he suggested, "and Stoner."

"That sort of thing, yes. It wasn't a very sensible course for Mary Baker to adopt, the more so as for religious reasons she had a real horror of divorce. But she was one of those warm, good-natured, muddle-headed women — not, in temperament, unlike Mrs. Rattenbury — to whom a man's affection is overwhelmingly necessary, as much for emotional as for physical reasons; and three years of Baker had starved that side of her so effectively that when she did break out, she broke out with a vengeance. I've seen a photograph of her, and can tell you that she was rather a big woman (though not fat), as dark as her husband or her lover, with a large mouth and eyes, and a Rubensish figure. Why she married Baker in the first place I really can't make out. He was well-to-do — or, anyway, seemed so — but Mary was the sort of woman to whom money quite genuinely means nothing; and oddly enough, Snow seems to have been as indifferent to it as she.

"Baker was a manufacturer. His factory just outside Twelford made expensive model toys — ships, airplanes, cars, and so forth. The demand for such things is strictly limited — people who know the value of money very properly hesitate before spending fifteen guineas on a toy which their issue are liable to sit on, or drop into a pond, an hour later — and when Philip Eckerson built a factory in Ruislip for producing the same sort of thing, only more cheaply, Baker's profits dropped with some abruptness to rather less than half what they'd been before. So for five years there was a price-war — a price-war beneficial to the country's nurseries, but ruinous to Baker and Eckerson alike. When eventually they met, to arrange a merger, both of them were close to bankruptcy.

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"It was on March 10th of this year that they met — not on neutral territory, but in Baker's house at Twelford, where Eckerson was to stay the night. Eckerson was an albino, which is uncommon, but apart from that the only remarkable thing about him was obstinacy, and since he confined this trait to business, the impression he made on Mary Baker during his visit to her house was in every respect colorless. She was aware, in a vague, general way, that he was her husband's business rival, but she bore him not the least malice on that account; and as to Snow, the mysteries of finance were beyond him, and from first to last he never understood how close to the rocks his employer's affairs had drifted. In any case, neither he nor Mary Baker had much attention to spare for Eckerson, because an hour or two before Eckerson arrived Baker summoned the pair of them to his study, informed them that he knew of their liaison, and stated that he would take steps immediately to obtain a divorce.

"It's doubtful, I think, if he really intended to do anything of the kind. He didn't sack Snow, he didn't order his wife out of the house, and apparently he had no intention of leaving the house himself — all of which would amount, in law, to condoning his wife's crime and nullifying the suit. No, he was playing cat-and-mouse, that was all; he knew his wife's horror of divorce, and wished quite simply to make her miserable for as long as the pretense of proceedings could be kept up; but neither Mary nor Snow had the wit to see that he was duping them for his own pleasure, and they assumed in consequence that he meant every word he said. Mary became hysterical — in which condition she confided her obsession about divorce to Snow. And Snow, a remarkably naive and impressionable young man, took it all *au grand sérieux*. He had not, up to now, displayed any notable animus against Baker, but Mary's terror and wretchedness fanned hidden fires, and from then on he was implacable. They were a rather pitiful pair, these two young people cornered by an essentially rather trivial issue, but their very ignorance made them dangerous, and if Baker had had more sense he'd never have played such an imbecile trick on them. Psychologically, he was certainly in a morbid condition, for apparently he was prepared to let the relationship go on, provided he could indulge his sadistic instincts in this weird and preposterous fashion. What the end of it all would have been, if death hadn't intervened, one doesn't, of course, know.

"Well, in due course Eckerson arrived, and Mary entertained him as well as her condition would allow, and he sat up with Baker till the small hours, talking business. The two men antagonized one another from the start; and the more they talked, the more remote did the prospect of a merger become, until in the latter stages all hope of it vanished, and they went to their beds on the very

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worst of terms, with nothing better to look forward to than an extension of their present cut-throat competition, and eventual ruin. You'd imagine that self-interest would be strong enough, in a case like that, to compel them to some sort of agreement, but it wasn't — and of course the truth of the matter is that each was hoping that, if competition continued, the other would crack first, leaving a clear field. So they parted on the landing with mutual, and barely concealed, ill-will; and the house slept.

"The body was discovered shortly after nine next morning and the discoverer was Mrs. Blaine, the cook. Unlike Snow, who lived in, Mrs. Blaine had a bed-sitting-room in the town and it was as she was making her way round to the back door of Baker's house, to embark on the day's duties, that she glanced in at the drawing-room window and saw the gruesome object which lay in shadow on the hearth-rug. Incidentally, you mustn't waste any of your energy suspecting Mrs. Blaine of the murder; I can assure you she had nothing to do with it, and I can assure you, too, that her evidence, for what little it was worth, was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. . . .

"Mrs. Blaine looked in at the window, and her first thought, to use her own words, 'was that 'e'd fainted.' But the blood on the corpse's hair disabused her of this notion without much delay, and she hurried indoors to rouse the household. Well, in due course Inspector Casby arrived, and in due course assembled such evidence as there was. The body lay prone on a rug soaked with dark venous blood, and the savage cut which had severed the internal jugular vein had obviously come from behind, and been wholly unexpected. Nearby, and innocent of fingerprints, lay the sharp kitchen knife which had done the job. Apart from these things, there was no clue.

"No clue, that is, of a positive sort. But there *had* been an amateurish attempt to make the death look like a consequence of burglary — or rather, to be more accurate, of housebreaking. The pane of a window had been broken, with the assistance of fly-paper to prevent the fragments from scattering, and a number of valuables were missing. But the breakfast period is not a time usually favored by thieves, there were no footprints or marks of any kind on the damp lawn and flower bed beneath the broken window (which was not, by the way, the window through which Mrs. Blaine had looked, but another, at right angles to it, on a different side of the house), and finally — and in Inspector Casby's opinion, most conclusive of all — one of the objects missing was a tiny but very valuable bird-study by the Chinese emperor Hui Tsung, which Baker, no connoisseur or collector of such things, had inherited from a great-uncle. The ordinary thief, Casby argued, would scarcely give a Chinese miniature a

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second glance, let alone remove it. No, the burglary was bogus; and unless you postulated an implausibly sophisticated double-bluff, then the murder had been done by one of the three people sleeping in the house. As to motive — well, you know all about that already; and one way and another it didn't take Inspector Casby more than twenty-four hours to make his arrest.

Somewhat grudgingly, Fen relinquished the walnuts and applied himself to stuffed dates instead. His mouth full, he looked at the company expectantly; and with equal expectancy the company looked back at him. It was Wakefield who broke the silence.

"But that can't be *all*," he protested.

"Certainly it's all," said Fen. "I've told you the story as Inspector Casby told it to me, and I now repeat the question he asked me at the end of it — and which I was able to answer, by the way: *Who killed Baker?*"

Wakefield stared mistrustfully. "You've left something out."

"Nothing, I assure you. If anything, I've been rather more generous with clues than Inspector Casby was. But if you still have no idea who killed Baker, I'll give you another hint: he died at 9 A.M. Does that help?"

They thought about this. Apparently it did not help in the least.

"All right," Wakefield said sulkily at last. "We give up. Who killed Baker?"

CHALLENGE TO THE READER: *Pause and consider: Who killed Baker? You now have all the facts — but we warn you, this is an exceptionally clever story . . .*

Gervase Fen replied blandly, "The public executioner killed him — after he had been tried and convicted for the murder of Eckerson."

For a moment Wakefield sat like one stupefied; then he emitted a howl of rage. "Unfair!" he shouted, banging on the table. "Trickery!"

"Not at all." Fen was unperturbed. "It's a trick story, admittedly, but you were given ample warning of that. It arose out of a discussion about the propriety of asking certain questions; and there was only one question — *Who killed Baker?* — which I asked. What's more, I emphasized at the outset that the mode of telling was as important as the thing told.

"But quite apart from all that, you had your clue. Mrs. Blaine, looking in through a window at a figure lying in shadow, concluded that violence had been done for the reason that she saw blood on the hair. Now that blood, as I mentioned, was dark venous blood; and I mentioned also that Baker had black, heavily-brilliantined hair. Is it conceivable that dark blood would be *visible* on such hair — visible, that is, when the body was in shadow and the observer outside the window of the room in which it lay? Of course not. Therefore, the body was not Baker's. But it couldn't

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have been Mary Baker's, or Snow's, since they too were black-haired — and that leaves only Eckerson. Eckerson was an albino, which means that his hair was white; and splotches of blood would show up on white hair all right — even though it was in shadow, and Mrs. Blaine some distance away. Who, then, would want to kill Eckerson? Baker, obviously, and Baker alone — I emphasized that both Snow and Mary were quite indifferent to the visitor. And who, after the arrest, would be likely to kill (notice, please, that I never at any time said 'murder') Baker? There's only one possible answer to that. . . ."

"And what happened to the wife?" Haldane asked. "Did she marry Snow?"

"No. He melted," said Fen complacently, "away. She married someone else, though, and according to Inspector Casby is very happy now. Baker's and Eckerson's businesses both collapsed, under heavy debts."

There was a pause; then: "The nature of existence," said Wakefield suddenly, "has troubled philosophers in all ages. What are the sensory and mental processes which cause us to assert that this table, for instance, is *real?* The answer given by —"

"Will have to wait," said Haldane firmly, "till we meet again." He stood up. "Shall we join the ladies?"

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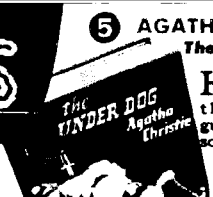

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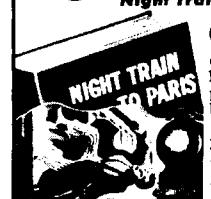

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